

Moco's, Kuroko no Basuke -Replace II- novel G1 English...



mocopersonal.tumblr.com/post/33425695123

i'm back

\o/

and by 'i', i mean the novel translations trololololol

as usual, this is a translation of a translation, more specifically from [here](#).

thank you very very very very much to [krynos](#) and [nai](#) for helping to proofread~~ <3 really saved me lots of time OTL

The 1st G: Welcome to Teikou's Festival



It was around June. The rainy season was raising the humidity and temperature while creating a suffocating feeling as it slowly eroded away at the Japanese archipelago.

Needless to say, Teikou Middle School was also affected by the rainy season. However, the students had no time to be depressed. The school festival was approaching.

The main reason for purposely arranging for the school festival to be held during the rainy season was in order for it to coincide with the founding day of the school.

For the students who had just finished their midterm exams, it was a chance to let out their excitement and busy themselves with preparations. The school was filled with a festive atmosphere. Everyone was feeling ill at ease, and

was reluctantly bidding farewell to the days leading up to the school festival. ((not sure with the translations from 'for the students etc etc' until the end of the para. Tbh I have no idea what i typed. BUT THANK YOU NAI FOR MAKING THINGS SMOOTHER OMG AKSLDJFHALKSDJFH))

Today was the long-awaited day before the school festival, the [teru teru bozu](#) in all of the classrooms finally worked. The sky had finally cleared up.

“The rain’s stopped. That’s great.”

Due to the setting up of the stalls, the school campus was packed with people. Momoi Satsuki walked over from the side, looked up at the sky, and sighed.

According to the weather forecast, tomorrow would also be a clear day. The long awaited school festival would finally start. Sure enough, the mood would only be good if the weather was good as well.

“How long awaited.” Momoi said to herself. She went through the school compound, and headed to the second playground ((ok by 'school compound' i mean the empty space where the stalls are being set up, and 'playground' is more of the field where the sports activities are held? i would put 'field' but 'second field' seems weird)). To return to their classroom, it’s more convenient to walk outside than to walk inside the building.

Even though the second playground did not have as many people when compared to the school compound, a performance stage is being set up, frantically being prepared for the school festival. Momoi walked on the road, watching them at the corner of her eye, when suddenly she heard someone calling her name.

“Satsukiiii!”

“Mm? Aomine-kun?”

Hearing her childhood friend’s voice, Momoi stopped and looked around.

However, she couldn’t see anyone.

“Eh?”

“Over here, over here. Look up. Up.”

“Up?”

Thinking that he might be in a classroom, Momoi looked up to the block of classrooms, but instead caught sight of Aomine’s figure at an unexpected location.

“Ah, Aomine-kun!? What are you doing!!”

“What do you mean 'what am I doing'? I’m hanging up the banner.”

Aomine Daiki had an aloof expression, and was squatting on top of one of the trees planted along both sides of the playground, looking down at Momoi ((okay i think the chinese translator did a typo with '书', and actually meant '树' cause the first one means 'books', and the second means 'trees'. so i’m going with trees. but feel free to disagree trololol)). Indeed, he was holding onto the corner of a banner in his hands.

The other corner of the banner is already tied onto the tree on the other side. It seems that he planned to tie a large banner between the trees.

“I-It’s very dangerous! It’ll be troublesome if you were to fall and injure yourself!”

Momoi hurriedly ran under the tree, but Aomine said indifferently: “Relax, relax.” He then tied the banner onto the tree trunk.

“Alright, success.”

With a sense of achievement, he slipped down the tree and jumped to Momoi’s side.

“Aomine-kun, hand! Let me see your hand!? You’re not hurt, are you!?”

Momoi anxiously grabbed both of Aomine’s hands and confirmed that his palms were not injured. This guy actually slid down the tree with his bare hands. Momoi was worried that his palms would be scratched, but fortunately, Aomine’s palms were merely dirtied a little, and were uninjured.

“That’s great.”

Momoi sighed, but Aomine said in surprise:

“I already said that I’m fine. You’re too worried.”

“But if the ace’s hands were to be injured, it would be troublesome during the next competition.”

“So you were more worried of the competition...”

Aomine was taken by surprise. Momoi puffed out her chest and said: “I am the team’s manager after all.” “Oh... Oh... I see.” Aomine said in surprise as he scratched the back of his head. He then looked up at the banner. Momoi followed and looked up as well.

“Is this the project your class is doing?”

Momoi asked. Aomine shook his head and said:

“It’s the Riddle Society’s. I was lazing off on the tree, and was spotted by them and asked to help out.”

“Lazing off!?”

This time was Momoi’s turn to be surprised.

“Because the preparations for the festival is too boring.”

“How can it be? Isn’t it very interesting?”

“It’s too annoying. Decorating the classroom, origami flowers or something like that. It’s so baffling.”

Hearing Aomine’s complaints, Momoi couldn’t help but giggle.

Indeed, it was difficult to imagine Aomine doing delicate work like folding origami flowers.

“Satsuki, what is your class doing?”

“We are opening a crêpe shop!”

Momoi enthusiastically replied. “We’re decorating the classroom like a café, and then offering everyone crêpes. There are many flavours. Aomine-kun, you should come and try!”

Seeing Momoi having difficulty containing her excitement, Aomine thought for a while before asking:

“...What are you in charge of?”

“Making the crêpe!”

“Then nevermind.”

“Ehhhh!! What do you mean!”

Momoi protested loudly. This sound was like a clap of thunder, and Aomine immediately covered his ears.

“Be a little quieter...”

“Who asked you to say such excessive things!”

“What’s excessive is your cooking skills. Those aren’t things meant for humans to eat.”

“T-That’s not true! It’s only making crêpes, there won’t be any problems!”

“Oh... Then good luck.”

Leaving that sentence behind, Aomine turned around to leave. His expression was as if he’s saying “However, I’m not expecting anything.”

“Hmph! I’ll definitely make you regret not dropping by to eat!”

Momoi said towards Aomine’s back. Aomine didn’t even look back and left.

■

“Listen! Aomine-kun’s really too much!” After returning to her classroom, Momoi angrily grabbed her classmate Izumi Yayoi and complained.

However, after listening to the entire story, Izumi’s feelings were:

“Oh, this year’s Riddle Society’s event is at the second playground.”

After saying that, she nodded to herself contentedly, wearing a face of realization.

“Hey!? Don’t you want to say something else!?”

Momoi protested, and Izumi apologized with a smile.

“Sorry, sorry, but I really don’t want to be involved in an argument between the both of you.”

“It’s not an argument! It’s Aomine-kun who’s too much!”

“Yes yes yes. Anyway, do you know about the ‘rumour’ from the Riddle Society?”

“Don’t change the topic...” Momoi said as she pouted unhappily. However, Izumi ignored her and continued:

“The Riddle Society will be having a stamp rally competition. Every year you’ll need two people in a team to participate. After that, if a guy and a girl were in the same team and join the competition, and if they win...

Izumi paused, and whispered next to Momoi’s ear and told the big secret.

“Apparently that pair would become a happy couple.”

“Oh?”

“Eh!? What kind of reaction is that! What do you mean by 'oh'!? This has been going around like crazy among the girls!”

“But how is it related to me?”

“How is it not related!? Go and join the competition with Aomine-kun!”

“I already said that Aomine-kun and I don't have such a relationship! This kind of competition...”

Her voice fading, Momoi's cheeks turned into a shade of crimson. After saying 'this kind of competition', a figure appeared in Momoi's mind. 'The person that's being thought of', this fact made Momoi a little embarrassed.

Of course, this reaction didn't escape Izumi's eyes.

“What is it, what is it? Could it be, Satsuki you want to join the competition with someone else?”

Izumi looked at Momoi with shiny eyes, using her arm to grab onto her neck tightly, and asked, pronouncing each word clearly.

"Momoi, who do you want to participate with?"

Having her cheek poked by Izumi, Momoi felt a little itchy and dodged her.

“E-Enough, don't talk about this anymore! Anyway, I won't join that competition. I want to concentrate on making crêpes during the festival!”

"Ah, is that so?"

“That's right, I want to make a super delicious crêpe, and give Aomine a surprise!”

“Of course, I also want to let that person try it.” Momoi silently added in her heart.

■

In the end, the one who was surprised during the school festival was Momoi herself.

“I beg you, please don't make any more crêpes!”

Izumi pleaded with her hands clasped together.

It was the morning of the school festival.

The kitchen of Creamy☆Crêpe, the café Momoi's class set up, was covered with cinder.

This was the wreckage left behind from Momoi's failed attempts to make crêpe.

“For the sake of our class, please stop.”

The other classmates silently nodded, agreeing with Izumi's pleas. If this were to continue, before they could even serve their customers crêpe, the ingredients for the crêpe would be all burnt up. Before they could even open their café, they'd have to shut down their business; either that or after serving the customers crêpe cinder, they'd have to close down their newly opened café.

“Eh, but...”

Momoi was in a very difficult position. Indeed, even she herself thought that the floor of crêpe cinder was appalling.

She had even planned to put everything into making the crêpes. It really made people feel a little pity.

“Why don’t you be a waitress!?”

Izumi suggested. The boys unanimously agreed: “This is a good idea!”

Originally, Momoi was to be Creamy ☆ Crêpe’s signature waitress, but because of her strong demands, she was allowed into the kitchen.

For those working behind-the-scenes in the kitchen, their uniform are all aprons. However, waiters have a different uniform. Specifically, it is like this: The upper body is a white shirt with a black vest, the lower body is a tight black skirt with a white apron.

“This dressing is a little mature, but in the end it does suit Momoi’s image.”

The boys all agreed. However, the other girls were a little reluctant to Izumi’s suggestion: “Just that...”

“The waitress clothes, we didn’t prepare a spare one.”

Izumi: “Otherwise change with someone?”

“With who...?”

The girls, including Izumi, all looked at Momoi.

“Nn?”

Momoi was puzzled.

Momoi was considered tall in their class. The amount of people who can change uniforms with her are already small, but including her impressive figure, the limitations were even more.“

”...Nn, it’s really a little difficult...”

Izumi muttered, and the other girls nodded in agreement.

“Nn? Is something the matter?”

Only the one involved, Momoi, didn’t understand what they were talking about, and was confused.

“Since that’s the case, I can only use this trump card...”

Izumi determinedly grabbed both of Momoi’s hands.

“Satsuki, listen well.”

“Nn.”

“Your job, isn’t as a chef, nor is it a waitress!”

“Nn? Is there still other jobs?”

“Just don’t do anything!”

“Ah?”

“For our class, this whole day today, don’t come near the café, go to other places and play on your own.”

Like that, Momoi was pushed out of the classroom by her classmates and chased to the school festival.

“What to do...”

Walking in the school alone, Momoi had nothing to do.

She never thought that it would become like this. Also, it was somewhat a blow.

Even though the school festival had just begun, the corridors were full of people walking by. Parents, siblings and residents from the vicinity can already be seen.

Everyone is smiling happily, enjoying the school festival.

“...Being frustrated doesn’t help.”

Momoi took a breath and relaxed her body.

No matter what, today is the school festival. If she were to be upset, it’ll be too much of a waste.

She stood at an end of the corridor and opened a small booklet. She started searching for where to go.

I remember, Tetsu-kun’s class is at... As Momoi was searching.

“Momoi-san, do you want to eat curry?”

“Nn?”

The moment she looked up, Momoi’s maiden heart was shot by Cupid’s arrow.

“T-Tetsu-kun!!”

“Yes.”

Kuroko Tetsuya was standing in front of her. But, he was different from the usual Kuroko. He was actually wearing a tailcoat.

Momoi was completely red, and couldn’t help but hold fast onto the booklet:

“Te-T-T-T-T-Tetsu-kun!!”

“Yes.”

“It really suits you!”

“Is that so?”

Kuroko gently raised his wrist, and observed his outfit from the cuffs. Even this act, in Momoi’s eyes was found to be extremely elegant, making her heart beat fast like a deer lunging about. It was really ‘beauty lies in the lover’s eyes’. This reaction was unintentional, and she was unable to control it.

“Although our class is a curry restaurant, but in the end it became dressing up like a butler to serve the customers... You don’t find it strange?”

“No!! Absolutely not! It’s very cool!”

Momoi frantically shook her head to deny it, Kuroko then smiled, somewhat relieved.

“Thank you.”

Ah, really, I want to take a picture of this moment to treasure it forever!

Momoi thought seriously.

“Momoi-san, if you don’t mind, do you want to come to our class to eat curry? It’s now early afternoon, so there aren’t many customers.”

Such a rare invite, how could Momoi refuse. She immediately answered: “Of course I don’t mind!”

“Over here.” Kuroko brought Momoi towards his classroom. It was a classroom that was two classrooms away from them.

In the classroom, the wall facing the corridor had the words ‘Elegant de CURRY’ written on it. If it were on a normal occasion, Momoi would have been suspicious of the tastes of the shop from the start, but thanks to Kuroko’s tailcoat appearance, the shop’s name was considered to be magnificent.

Upon entering the classroom, Momoi realized that indeed, there weren’t many customers, and was somewhat deserted.

Kuroko, wearing a tailcoat, served her curry. Other than that the curry and rice were placed in separate containers, it was the same as household curry. However, Kuroko serving her in a tail coat, this sight alone, made Momoi feel the sense of luxury that she was dining in a five star restaurant.

Watching Kuroko remove the plate after the food was finished, Momoi smiled and said: “Thank you for the meal. It was very delicious.” Kuroko replied with a smile: “Thank you.”

“What does Momoi-san plan to do after this?”

“Eh?”

“Where do you plan to go?”

Hearing Kuroko’s question, Momoi shifted her line of sight:

“This... I haven’t decided yet. There was a bit of a mistake, so today I’ll be very free...”

The mistake mentioned was that her cooking skills were worse than imagined. However, that doesn’t need to be mentioned.

“Does Tetsu-kun have any place to suggest?”

Momoi asked in return. Kuroko silently thought for a while and said:

“Suggestion... How about this, if it’s alright with you, do you want to join the stamp rally competition with me?”

He gave a very unexpected answer.

“Ah?”

Momoi opened her eyes wide, and blankly blinked. Upon seeing that, Kuroko asked: “Do you not know about it? It’s the stamp rally competition held by the Riddle Society.”

“It’s organized by the Riddle Society. Two people in a team, you need to answer questions while going round the school. I was actually planning to join with my classmate Mafuji-kun ((not sure with the nameeeeeee 卷藤)), but he

isn't too free today. That is why, if it's alright with you, do you want to join with me?"

"...Tetsu-kun, after that... After joining, what do you plan to do?"

Momoi asked with a serious face.

She never thought that 'Riddle Society's stamp rally competition' would be mentioned at such a time. Also, once this rally competition is mentioned, Momoi's first thought is that rumour.

However, Kuroko's answer was very simple.

"What do you mean by what do I plan to do... Of course I'll answer questions."

"I don't mean that! If you join... do you want to get first place?"

"Of course. I heard that this year's grand prize is LeBron James's basketball shoes, so I must win."

"Basketball shoes...!"

Momoi hung her head in dismay. However, very quickly she analysed the current situation in her head.

From Kuroko's expression, he seems to not know about 'that rumour'.

But Kuroko also said that he wanted to win. After that, he chose her as his partner.

In other words. The answer was clear.

Momoi suddenly raised her head, looked at Kuroko and said:

"Tetsu-kun, I want to join!!"

"Really? That's great."

"We definitely, definitely must win!!"

"Nn, I will do my best."

Hearing Kuroko's determined reply, Momoi raised both her hands, and shouted in her heart "That's great!"

■

Leaving 'Elegant de CURRY', Momoi, briskly walked inside the school.

She had a big smile to everyone.

Kuroko had to be a waiter in the early afternoon, and the Riddle Society's stamp rally competition was in the late afternoon, so the both of them agreed to meet up at the appointed time of the competition. ((unsure with the specific words of the later bit of the sentence))

Made an agreement with Tetsu-kun... Just thinking about this, Momoi felt that she was somewhat floating.

Hurry up and be late afternoon. She walked along the corridor happily, but suddenly realized that one of the classrooms was somewhat odd.

The wall facing the corridor was filled with pictures of the zodiac, and even had the words 'Astrology Society's Divination Division' on it.

The words were even in calligraphy.

Seeing this, Momoi instead remembered.

It seems that she has heard before, Midorima would join the Astrology Society's event and help out.

For the Astrology Society to eye on Midorima who would base his life on the 'morning horoscope programme'... Whether it was a natural thing, Momoi does not know. She only heard that the Astrology Society's president personally asked Midorima for help, and Midorima agreed.

Taking some notice, Momoi walked into the classroom.

Once she moved the curtain aside to enter the room, she couldn't help but exclaim: "Whoa..."

In the classroom, the windows don't even need to be mentioned, even the other three walls were heavily covered with blackout curtains. The classroom was divided into many small cubicles, and the indirect lighting from each of the cubicles became the classroom's only source of light. In the room that was somewhat sombre due to the indirect lighting, the Astrology Society's members and the students that came for a consultation were sitting face to face at the tables, speaking to each other in low voices.

It was a somewhat bizarre sight.

Midorima was also sitting in one of the cubicles. At the moment, there were no guests, and he was alone.

"Hi, Midorin!"

Momoi light-heartedly waved at him, and sat in the chair opposite Midorima.

"...Momoi? What are you here for?"

Hearing Midorima's cold response, Momoi pouted and said:

"I heard that you were helping the Astrology Society, so I came to see you."

"Oh. You're really free."

"Isn't Midorin really free as well. ...However, it's really a surprise."

"What's a surprise?"

Midorima asked in return while pushing his glasses.

"Because in my mind, Midorin would dislike troublesome things, and refuse to come and help."

"Indeed it's very troublesome, however, there is a fitting repayment."

"Ah, you can get your morning's lucky item?"

"How did you know!?"

Midorima looked at Momoi in surprise. Seeing him in such shock, it was Momoi who in the end was a little confused.

"Because, if it's something that Midorin wants, there'll only be that..."

Probably if it were another member from the basketball club instead, he or she would also be able to guess it in one go. Even though that was what Momoi thought, for Midorima however, it was a very big shock.

“Hmph, don’t think that you have seen through me!”

Midorima had somewhat got the wrong idea.

“I have also seen through you.”

“Ah? How?”

“Momoi, I’ll give you a divination.”

After saying that, Midorima took a paper bag from under the table and took out a large piece of clothing.

“Midorin, what is that?”

“The coat that a divinator must wear. Not only must I be like one, I must also look like one.” ((um the 'be like one' part hmm... it's like, 'be alike in spirit'. so basically it's something like 'not only must i be similar internally, i must also be similar externally'))

Midorima shook open the coat, and wore it.

Although it’s said to be a coat, it was in fact more like a cloak. Midorima put the cloak on his shoulders, and put the hood up. Thus, the strange diviner made his debut in full garb.

“Alright, Momoi, I’ll give you your divination.”

“Eh, alright... Um, what are you going to divine?”

Momoi looked at the table. There was a glass kerosene lamp and a conch shell. It’s not the usual tools of a divinator: a crystal ball and tarot cards.

“You won’t be using... this, right?”

Momoi pointed at the conch shell and asked. Midorima answered: “That’s my lucky item for today.”

“Since I am the one doing the divination, of course what I’ll use will be the morning horoscope.”

Then what’s the use for a diviner like you... Even though Momoi had some doubts, she nodded and said: “Nn, that’s right.”

“Momoi, it seems that you’re a... Taurus, right.”

“Mn.”

Momoi nodded honestly.

“Your luck for today is...”

Not finishing his sentence, Midorima fell silent. His expression was rather grim.

“M-Midorin? What’s the matter?”

Momoi asked uneasily, only to hear Midorima firmly answer:

“Momoi, leave this place immediately.”

“Ah!? Why!?”

"I remembered. Today's luck, the one who is the least compatible with Cancer is Taurus. Once there's any relation, I will have very bad luck!"

"Then it's not mine, but your fortune!"

Due to that one-sided reason, Momoi was chased out of the 'Divination Division'.

"Really, what is going on..."

Although she felt rather dissatisfied, there was no use to be angry with Midorima. With no other choice, she decided to go to the other classrooms.

The classroom next to the Astrology Society's, the Handicraft Society, was selling handmade merchandise. Momoi only realized then that the classrooms here were all for the clubs and societies.

Momoi, who was wandering around, decided to visit them one by one. It was then she realized that Teikou Middle School had a lot of clubs.

Handicraft Club, Science Club, Astronomy Club, Performing Arts Club, Magic Society, Wrestling Society... etc etc.

Momoi interestedly looked at this world that was completely different from the Basketball Club.

Suddenly, she stopped in her tracks. Looking into a one of the classrooms that was along her path, Momoi suddenly discovered an unexpected figure.

"...Akashi-kun!?"

The person that everyone in the Teikou Basketball Club was in awe of • Akashi Seijuurou was leisurely sitting in a chair. In front of him was a Shogi chessboard.

Momoi turned around to look at the wall facing the corridor. On it was a poster with the words 'The big Shogi convention! BY the Shogi Club'. In a corner of the poster were the words: 'If you can win against the member of the Shogi Club, you get a luxury prize!'

Momoi quietly looked into the classroom.

What was surprising was that the average age of those in the classroom was very old. A large number of people who were going against the Shogi Club members were adult men. Among the challengers, only Akashi was a junior high student.

Akashi was still as usual, sitting in a kneeling position with an indifferent face (~~(i dont know why he's kneeling here when he was mentioned to be sitting in a chair earlier.~~ so [animemangadaisuki](#) explained to me, the pose is the usual pose akashi has when he's playing shogi~ i dont know how to name/describe that pose, so i shall just leave the translations like that~ if you know what that pose is called, do educate me~ <3)), holding the Shogi pieces with a hand. The Shogi Club member he was going against was covered with sweat, his eyes glued furiously at the chessboard. Even if she doesn't know Shogi, Momoi can tell with a glance who was better. It seems that this chess match was very intense. Akashi's chessboard was surrounded with a crowd of spectators.

"Take this!"

With a clack ((or whatever the sound effect for placing a chess piece on the board is)), the Shogi Club member made his move. The spectators exclaimed. It seemed to be a brilliant move.

Even that club member was proud of that move, looking at Akashi with a smirk, as if saying: "With that, you should be admitting defeat, right?" However, in the next instant, there was another clack on the chessboard.

“Eh? Ah!?”

The Shogi Club member gave a shout of despair. The move that he had thought desperately of was broken down by Akashi in an instant.

Seeing Akashi's surprising skill in making an instant judgment, the surrounding spectators also gasped in a cold breath, unable to speak.

The Shogi Club member stared at the Shogi chessboard while wiping off his sweat again, and finally,

“I've lost...”

He forced out that sentence, hanging his head low.

“Ohhhhh!” The spectators cheered after being stunned for a moment. Amongst the cheers, the words 'This is already the fifth consecutive win' 'I have never seen such technique' 'Where is this kid from' could be heard.

However, for Akashi, this seemed to be a natural result, and wasn't really happy.

“I didn't think that the president's strength would only be like that. What is my prize this time?”

He asked the Shogi Club's president, who was slumping, depressed.

Momoi, who had been watching all along, quietly turned around to leave. While walking, she thought that there was a phrase that could describe that situation... She pondered. After muttering for a while, she snapped her hands together, and got it!

“I know! 'Challenge'!”

Incidentally, this day, other than the Shogi Club to suffer from Akashi's 'challenge', the Go Club, the Chess Club, the Othello Club, all of them ended in Akashi's win. Of course, Momoi did not know about all that.

■

Coming out from the clubs and societies' section, Momoi went through the school compound, and reached another block of classrooms. This is another place for the clubs to present themselves.

Like earlier, Momoi was walking and watching according to its order. In the end, she found a long queue at the corridor.

Wanting to see what was happening at the head of the queue, she quickened her footsteps.

“Excuse me, please stand at the side! Ah, please don't take pictures.”

She never thought that she'd bump into Kise Ryouya, who was organizing the queue. However,

“Ki-chan, why are you dressed like that!?”

“Ah, Momoicchi. Morn'.”

Kise brightly waved a hand at Momoi, who was wide-eyed. However, the clothing he was in was extremely lavish. What gave people a fresher impression was his hairstyle that was different from usual.

“M-Morning... No! What kind of dress up is this!?”

“Ah, this? It really suits me, right?”

Kise purposely turned around once to let Momoi see. Kise, who was wearing a French type of costume, seemed to be a bishounen right out of a shoujo manga.

"Our class is having a festival ((the religious, temple kind)). This is the clothes for that."

The classroom Kise was pointing at had a poster pasted on the wall at the end of the long queue,

"[Ennichi](#)~ Bringing you a brand new love and perception that is gorgeous and magnificent~"

The poster had that strange slogan, surrounded by a countless amount of fake roses.

"...I really don't know where to start to complain about."

Seeing Momoi in a daze, Kise gave a bitter smile and said:

"I fully understand your feelings. I also felt that it was a little odd when I was decorating the classroom."

"Shouldn't you already notice this kind of thing from the start? When the project was being proposed."

"Nn, how do I say it, if you know the entire picture, you won't think of it the same way..."

According to Kise's explanation, when his class was deciding about the event, they had originally planned to open an 'afternoon tea café'. And the biggest reason why this suggestion was given the biggest priority was that among the girls in his class, there was a very popular shoujo manga that was based on the French Revolution ((the chi words got censored again. 法国大**, so i'm just gonna assume it's 法国大革命 which is the french revolution)). However, the boys didn't know anything about the plot. The girls said 'leave the interior design to us, just relax', and the boys felt that 'then we can save time', and didn't think much about it and agreed.

However, for the school festival, the number classes that applied to open a café were too many and the number of kitchens was limited. Kise's class was unfortunately not selected, and couldn't obtain the permission to open a café.

Hence, they started to discuss about different plans, however a few of the girls had already started preparing for the 'afternoon tea'. What was unexpected was that the clothes that were to be worn on the day were already planned.

It's not good to waste other people's efforts, so in the end they came up with a compromise to 'wear the prepared clothes and have a festival ((the same 'religious/temple' kind, not the school festival))'.

"The only thing I didn't expect was that they had actually prepared this kind of clothing."

Looking at Kise who was laughing openly, Momoi thought to herself "This is definitely planned properly by the girls.", but when she spoke, the words became:

"...Usually very few people would organize a festival (('religious/temple' festival)) as the backup plan."

"Ah, is it?"

"Nn... However, there are many customers."

"That's true. It seems that because it's very rare, so everyone has come over to take a look."

"Very rare..."

Momoi said half-heartedly, and couldn't help but give a forced smile. After she started talking with Kise, she could feel burning gazes on her back. It was probably the gazes of the girls who had their eyes on Kise.

Together with the incoming gazes, there were also girls whispering: "Together with our Oscar-sama..." ((oscar is the

main female char of 'the rose of versailles' by ikeda riyoko. the popular shoujo manga mentioned earlier is prob this one btw))

It seems that only Kise himself was completely oblivious to the searing gazes and whispers.

“Ah, that’s right. Momoicchi, you must also take a look at how Murasakibaracchi dressed up as! Wait, I’ll go call him.”

After he finished, he ran into the classroom.

That’s right, Mukkun and Ki-chan are in the same class.

“We’re coming.”

“That’s fast. Mukkun... Mu-M-M-M-M-Mukkun!?”

“Ah, it’s Sacchin.”

Looking at Momoi who had clearly been dealt with a huge blow, Murasakibara started to chuckle.

“Why are you here?”

“Wha-W-W-W-W-What do you mean by ‘why’, Mukkun, you should be the one to be asked why. Why are you dressed like that!?”

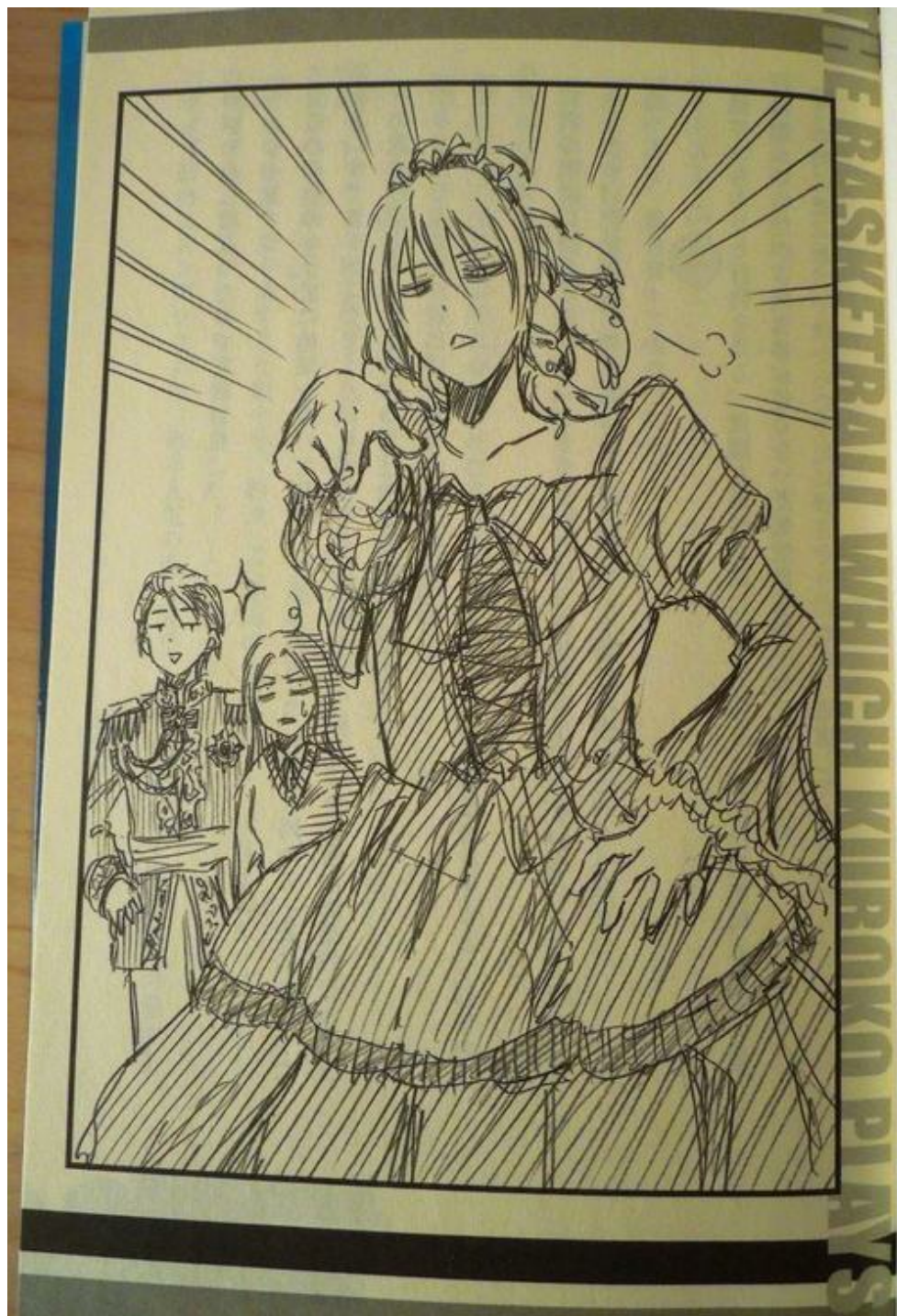
“Nn? Because today is the festival (('religious/temple')).”

Murasakibara answered with a tilt of his head.

“It’s a shock, right?”

Kise said with a smile, Momoi nodded.

Anyone who saw how Murasakibara had dressed up as would have a shock.



After all, the nearly two meters tall Murasakibara was actually wearing a thick dress that was full of lace.

“Why would you wear this...”

Momoi mumbled as she stared at Murasakibara in a daze, Kise explained:

“Ah, because Murasakibaracchi’s too tall, none of the clothes are of his size. It seems that the only piece of clothing that he could wear is this dress. Get it?”

“I don’t quite understand...”

She couldn’t help but wonder who the dress was originally for.

“Murasakibaracchi, do that again.”

“Nn? Nn, alright.”

Kise suggested, and after hearing it, Murasakibara nodded. Momoi asked: “What is that?” And was merely told: “Just watch.”

Murasakibara coughed once, placed a hand on his hips, and pointed the other hand forward, made a pose and said:

“If there is no rice, then go eat pastries!!”

He even purposely made his voice higher pitched when he said it.

“...Ah?”

Murasakibara’s sudden performance gave Momoi a big surprise, and was frozen in place. Her voice was drowned out by the applause from the long queue together with ‘Amazing~’ ‘Too accurate~’ ((idk what 太搭了 means so i replaced it orz sorry)) ‘Once more~’.

Ignoring the calls, Murasakibara very quickly returned to the classroom.

“...That line really suits Mukkun...”

“Right!? When the atmosphere was high, we tried it once, and in the end everyone started falling over with laughter. We’d do it occasionally, and the guests will come swarming.”

After hearing Kise’s explanation, Momoi could only stand there in a daze, and give a sigh: “Ahh...”

Alright, taking back her previous words, everyone here wasn’t rushing over for Kise.

“Does Momoicchi want to come and take a look?”

“Mm...”

Momoi glanced at the queue. While she was talking with Kise, the queue was constantly moving. A lot of guests had gone into the classroom one by one, but the length of the queue remained unshortened.

“I have an appointment later in the afternoon. If I were to queue up, I reckon I won’t be able to make it. Sorry.”

“Is that so. What a pity.”

Kise didn’t try to persuade her to stay, and smiled while watching Momoi leave.

■

About an hour to the agreed meeting time with Kuroko, Momoi was already barely containing her excitement.

Walking around in the school compound, she would look at her watch from time to time, and when she realized that the minute hand had only moved by one space, she felt very regrettable.

I must calm down! I need to take it easy!

Momoi repeatedly admonished herself, but when she realized it, she was smiling widely again.

If Tetsu-kun and I were to get first place... Ah, no, what should I do!

In the end, compared to holding herself back from laughing, Momoi felt that she had to hold herself back from banging herself against the wall from embarrassment even more.

She had this struggle with herself for tens of minutes. When there was still fifteen minutes to the agreed time, Momoi went to the second playground where the registration for the stamp rally competition was.

Every year, the Riddle Society's stamp rally competition was extremely popular. There were a lot of people gathered here before the registration, and it was very crowded.

"Are all these people here to join the competition..."

Momoi weaved through the crowd, looking for Kuroko's figure.

"Ah, isn't this just wasted effort!?"

Momoi sighed, thinking that she was too rash.

That Kuroko, that Kuroko known as the 'phantom sixth member'. To try and look for him in the crowd was at the same level of difficulty as searching for a contact lens on the beach.

What to do. Momoi was somewhat lost, and looked around at her surroundings,

"Satsuki."

"Momoi-san."

The familiar voice caused Momoi to turn around, followed by a smile.

"Tetsu-kun!!"

She ran towards Kuroko, and Aomine who was standing next to Kuroko flicked her on her forehead, saying: "Oi, are you ignoring me."

"Your treatment is too different, isn't it?"

"I'm not ignoring you. It's just that there's only Tetsu-kun in my eyes."

"That's called 'ignoring'."

"Of course not. Right, Tetsu-kun."

Suddenly dragged into the childhood friends' everyday argument, Kuroko scratched his cheek and said: "Even if you were to ask me, I have nothing good to say."

"That's right, Momoi-san. We need to go and register."

"Ah, mn!"

Momoi answered cheerfully. Looking at the both of them that were queuing up, Aomine asked:

"Register? Register for what?"

"The Riddle Society's stamp rally competition."

"Aomine-kun, aren't you here to sign up for the competition?"

Momoi asked, a little surprised. Seeing the both of them together, she had thought that Aomine had also wanted to join the competition.

"Nope. I'm just looking for a place to laze off and rest, and in the end bumped into Tetsu and followed him here."

"You're amazing... You're even lazing off today?"

"It's nothing. Anyway, they also said that I would break things and cause more trouble if I were to help, so I'm very consciously keeping my distance from them."

"What is that..."

Momoi was even more surprised. However, she suddenly remembered that her own situation was similar, and thus she had no right to talk about him.

"And then? What's the stamp rally competition about?"

Kuroko explained it to Aomine, and when he mentioned the grand prize,

"Is that for real!"

Aomine's eyes shone. "Those shoes, I've longed for them for very long!"

Then, Aomine who had gotten excited grabbed Kuroko on the shoulders and said:

"Tetsu, let's join together!"

"What!?"

Not waiting for Kuroko's reply, Momoi shouted.

"N-No! Tetsu-kun wants to join with me!"

Right after she said it, Momoi pulled on Kuroko's left shoulder, as though wanting to grab him from Aomine's hands.

"Whoa!"

Suddenly getting pulled, Kuroko was a little unsteady. This resulted in Aomine, getting agitated, pulling him from the right. ((akjsdfhaldsjfh it's not the angry kind of agitation, but more like uh stimulated/excited? like when you poke a kitty/doggy constantly to agitate them into playing with you alksjdfhadsjfh idk what i'm saying anymore OTL i thesaurused 'agitated' for a better word and it gave me 'aroused' and i went 'trololol no.'))

"It doesn't matter. Satsuki, you're not interested in basketball shoes anyway."

"But I'm interested in the rally competition!"

"My motor skills are much better than yours, switch with me."

"The main event is riddles! Aomine-kun you'll be a hindrance!"

"Don't look down on my instincts!"

"You can't win a quiz with instincts!"

Like that, Momoi and Aomine with Kuroko caught in the middle, started to argue.

"Um..." Kuroko was stuck in the middle, but couldn't put a word in. He could only pull a bewildered face while getting pulled around.

The other students who were lining up to register for the competition stood by and watched, and would occasionally say: "Don't argue at such a place..." Or perhaps it should be said that no one wanted to be involved in such an

unrestrained argument, so everyone decided to just watch.

In the end, when the registration for the stamp rally competition was about to be closed, finally someone pitched in a word to the three of them.

“...Kurokocchi, what are you guys doing?”

Momoi and the others looked over, and saw Kise standing there, already changed into his uniform.

“Ah, Ki-chan... Ki-chan!?”

Momoi stared at Kise with wide eyes.

“If you argue at this kind of place, you’ll trouble people.”

“Say, it’s you who would cause people trouble in that kind of state.”

The ‘that kind of state’ that Aomine mentioned was the group of girls that had surrounded Kise.

“Hey, don’t push me!” “The one that’ll join the rally competition with Kise-kun is me!” “No, it’s me!” The girls were fighting while shoving each other. Following Kise’s movements, the three rows of girls that were surrounding him also moved, and had been an obstruction from the start. ((the ‘three rows’ thingy, the chinese phrase is 里三重外三重. 里 means inside, 三重 means triple, and 外 means outside. so basically i dont know whether it literally means three rows, or it’s actually six rows, or it’s just a way of describing a lot of rows))

“Kise-kun, you’re amazing.”

Kuroko said as he took the chance when Aomine and Momoi were staring blankly and broke free easily, touching his arm.

“Um, because a lot of girls had invited me to join the rally competition with them...”

Kise answered as he casually played with his bangs. “Eh, being too popular is also a kind of sin.”

That kind of captivating model smile made the girls surrounding him scream. On the other side,

“Oh no, the registration is going to be closed.”

“Really! If we can’t join, it’s all Aomine-kun’s fault!”

But Aomine didn’t care.

“Hey!? If you all ignore me, it’s very shameful for me!”

Kise was unhappy about his situation of being ignored.

“It’s you who’s ignoring us, Kise-kun! Hurry up and decide, who do you want to participate with!”

That sentence resulted in the girls’ attention being directed to Kise.

“Ah!? Ah, um...”

Kise looked upwards towards the sky, somewhat troubled. He had merely, as usual, ‘treat every girl with equal and gentle treatment’, and never thought that in the end he would get involved in trouble. Right now, no matter who he picks, it’d still result in the crowd getting angry. But he can’t not join the rally competition either. Kise was also desiring the grand prize.

About the choice of partner, Momoi and Aomine had started to argue again.

"It's me and Tetsu-kun!"

"It's me and Tetsu!"

The restarted argument was the same, and had no result.

The distant onlookers thought that they would continue to argue until the registration was closed, and didn't expect the final outcome to be so surprising.

"Um, can you listen to my opinion?"

Kuroko, who was completely forgotten about by the two, raised his hand and asked.

"I'll be in a team with Momoi, and Aomine-kun and Kise-kun can be in another team. How about that?"

"Ah?"

Momoi, Aomine and Kise said at the same time.

"T-Tetsu-kun, are you serious!?"

Momoi was overjoyed, but Aomine, who was beside her, said:

"Oi, Tetsu! Why should I be in the same team as that Kise!"

He pointed at Kise unhappily.

"Aominecchi! What do you mean by 'that'!? What's wrong with me!!"

Kise exclaimed.

"Also," Kuroko continued, "I had already invited Momoi-san first. So I can't be in the same team as Aomine-kun anymore."

"Tetsu-kun...!" Hearing Kuroko saying it so firmly, Momoi was elated, and was so happy she was about to pass out. Just the thought of having to compete at the rally competition was making her cling onto consciousness desperately.

"Cheh, why?"

Aomine grumbled. From previous experience, even though Kuroko were to say that, Aomine would not give up that easily.

"Besides, although Aomine-kun and I are very good together when it comes to basketball, but it's not quite so when it comes to other areas. If I were to be in the same team as you we won't win.

Hearing Kuroko's explanation, Aomine finally accepted: "That's true."

"Then alright, Kise. I'll team up with you."

"Say, what's the meaning of that condescending tone!?"

"What, do you have something to say?"

"Ah, um..."

Kise swept his eyes at the surrounding girls, and answered: “Nope.”

Immediately, the girls made a noise of disagreement, but Aomine’s ‘Do you all have something to say?’ completely solved everything.

Seeing this, Kuroko commented: “What absolute words.” ((aka what he says can’t be changed)) Kise said: “He’s a tyrant.” Momoi then absent-mindedly twisted her body and said: “Tetsu-kun’s really a black swan...!” ((no i dont know what the entire sentence about momoi means akjdfalsdjfh i just translated directly))

The two groups that had been finally made registered very quickly, and went towards the starting line of the stamp rally competition.

The starting point was below the banner that Aomine helped to put up. This was also the ending point.

When registering, the staff had briefly explained, for the stamp rally competition they had to challenge the four games that are distributed in the school, collect the stamps that are obtained after winning, and then return to the end point.

The first game. Three-legged race. From this point onwards, run over to the first game that is located at the other side of the second playground.

The strap that was obtained during the registration had tied Momoi and Kuroko’s leg together. Momoi’s mood right now was: So happy she that was about to fly.

“Momoi-san, does your leg hurt? Is the strap too tight?”

“A-A-A-Absolutely not! It’s just right! I-I-I-I-It’s too alright! Absolutely no problems!”

“Is it so? Then when we are walking, we’ll use the outer leg first.”

“M-M-M-M-M-M-Mn! Got it, relax!!”

“...Are you alright.”

“Of course!!”

Her excited words had become rather unclear.

If this continues, would I faint from happiness during the rally competition, Momoi silently thought to herself. However another inner voice said: ‘That’s just what I’d like!’

On the other hand, Aomine and Kise had their leg tied together, and were having a small sprinting practice.

“Eh... It’s really a little disappointing.”

“What is it?”

While running, Kise lamented. Aomine looked at him in surprise.

“Look, almost all the teams are a guy and a girl, why are us two guys having our arm over each other’s shoulders...”

“It’s not like there’s a choice. We couldn’t find other partners.”

“But, seeing the surrounding pairs of a guy and a girl, it’s still a little depressing...”

“It doesn’t matter who the teammate is. As long as we win, it’s fine.”

“...When you say that, I feel even sadder.”

“Ah?”

Although Kise was a little depressed, but the rhythm of the two of them running was very in tune. Seeing this, all the other participants went “Strong opponent...” “Is it a dark horse”, thus unknowingly, the two of them had aroused the fighting spirit of the people around them.

Finally, the Riddle Society’s president went up the stage that they had purposely prepared for this day. He faced the participants that were lined up side by side at the starting line, gave a respectful bow, and then slowly raised a hand.

In that hand was a black pistol-

Bang!

The sound of a gunshot.

All the participants dashed forward at the same time.

Not surprisingly, the ones ahead of the crowd was Aomine & Kise’s team.

“Kise, you’re too slow!”

“It’s Aominecchi’s who’s too fast!”

Not only was their running speed unimaginable, the two of them could even have an animated chat. The teams that were easily overshoot by them almost lost their fighting spirit.

Originally, the two of them had wanted to follow this pattern and rush to the end of the first competition to get the stamp, but Aomine suddenly said ‘Turn!’ and then turned ninety degrees.

The teams behind them were all surprised, but the most surprised one was his partner, Kise.

“A-Aominecchi!? Why are we turning!?”

“Because I have a kind of bad feeling.”

“Don’t joke around! We’re turning back!”

As they were about to turn around and dash to the finishing line.

Suddenly a wailing sound and a rumbling noise came from the second playground.

Aomine and Kise couldn’t help but stop and turn back to look, and found that the team that were charging straight for the finishing line had disappeared.

Not only that, the place that they should be standing at, was now a huge hole. That was the spot where Aomine had just turned. From the hole they could hear “Oi, what the hell!” “What’s going on!?” These confused voices and roars.

The participants that didn’t fall into the hole were stunned by the huge hole that had suddenly appeared. At that moment, they were returned to their senses by the voice from the loudspeakers.

“Please note, the people that fall into the traps will be disqualified.”

This reminder by the Riddle society was really too late.

“Traps...?”

The corners of Kise’s mouth twitched. Looking closely at the second playground, there was indeed several locations where the colour of the soil was different from its surroundings, as though it has been dug up.

“They actually set up traps at the playground, they’re really amazing...”

“Just what I’d like. It’s only fun if there’s a bit of a challenge.”

Aomine finally started to smile. It’s like meeting a fated opponent, wearing an overjoyed smile on his face.

He forcefully wrapped an arm over Kise’s shoulder.

“Kise, we’re dashing in!”

“Ah!? Hey, really, be more careful, otherwise we will fall in!?”

“Just believe in my instinct!”

“Are you reliable?”

“When it’s unreliable then... We’ll talk then!”

“Too reckless!”

“Don’t talk so much! Let’s go!”

Like that, Kise was dragged by Aomine into a run.

As long as one team starts moving, the other teams will continue the competition one after another. The other participants that were originally confused started to regain their morale, and started to run again. However, the traps were hidden very well, and from that moment on, there were a lot of teams that accidentally fell in and were hence eliminated.

Momoi, who was in high spirits due to having their legs tied together, started to calm down after looking at the situation.

“It’s a little troublesome...”

Momoi started to rack her brains. If observed carefully, the traps can be noticed. But that is too time consuming. Kuroko seemed to be also thinking of the same issue.

“Although it would be a bit slower, but it should be better to follow behind other people.”

He suggested.

“But in that case, the ranking won’t be very high.”

Momoi was a little worried, but Kuroko comfortingly said with a smile:

“Don’t worry. This is just the first game. There will be many more chances to overtake later on.”

■

These words that Kuroko said to Momoi, if said in the opposite sense, there was a group that can be considered to really stand out.

In other words, it was Aomine and Kise.

They easily finished the first competition by getting first place, took off the strap on their leg, and arrived at the destination of the second game: The first audio-visual room.

The second competition was a quiz ((the gameshow kind)). After all, it's the Riddle Society. You can pass by answering only one question, but if you answer it wrongly, you're disqualified. However, you can use 'pass' unlimitedly.

Kise, sitting on a chair in the first audio-visual room, turned to look around. There were already quite a number of teams sitting in the classroom. When they had just entered, it was clearly only the both of them in the classroom.

The two of them who were previously the first, were now slowly falling at the ranks. The reason was very simple, Aomine and Kise's standards were not on par with the standard of the questions.

Then, the staff announced the next question.

"Question. Among the three great gardens of Japan, other than Kenrokuen and Kairakuen, what is the remaining one?"

The other teams very quickly began to write the answer on the answer board, but Aomine and Kise got together and discussed instead.

"Aominecchi, do you know?"

"I only know 'kindergarten'.

"That's not a garden!"

"Then do you know?"

"If I knew, I wouldn't ask you!"

Before coming up with the answer, there was a ring, and the answering time ended.

The other teams

One by one, the other teams showed their answer board. For the nth time, Aomine and Kise lifted up the 'pass' sign.

"The answer is Korakuen."

The staff announced the answer, resulting in some being happy, others being upset.

Kise thought, this is also a type of psychological war.

Although 'pass' could be used without a limit. But at the meantime, the teams that answered correctly have long gone to the next level. The pressure of being left behind has resulted in many teams giving up on using 'pass', instead deciding to gamble, resulting in getting the wrong answer and unfortunately getting eliminated.

"Can only endure..."

Kise held in his anxiety, and took a breath. Aomine who was sitting next to him said rather impatiently: "Damn, so annoying..."

"Eh, hey, Aominecchi...?"

“What...”

Aomine didn't hide the annoyance in his heart, and looked at Kise with a leer. Kise's face paled.

“Aominecchi, you must be calm! Haste makes waste! There will definitely be a question that we can answer! You must endure!”

“Yeah, I got it!”

But your fidgety appearance isn't reassuring at all!

At the moment when Kise was feeling uneasy, Kuroko and Momoi's group came in.

“Eh, Aomine-kun, you guys are still here.”

Kuroko's unintentional sentence drew out Aomine's glare.

“Are we not allowed to be here?”

“...Aomine-kun, please don't get angry because you couldn't answer the question.”

Momoi accurately mentioned Aomine's dilemma.

“Just shut up...”

It's unclear whether his nerve had been jabbed at, but Aomine turned around somewhat peevishly. However, the following event made his mood even worse.

“Question. The author of 'Throw Away Your Books, Go Out into the Streets!', the famous songwriter, who is it?”

Aomine and Kise exchanged looks. They didn't need to speak to know what needs to be done.

At the sound of the ring, Kise raised the answer board.

“Pass.”

Kuroko, who was next to him, also raised the answer board.

“Terayama Shuuji.”

“Ah?”

Kise exclaimed in surprise. No way... At that moment,

“The correct answer is 'Terayama Shuuji.’”

The staff announced the answer.

“That's great! As expected of Tetsu-kun!”

Momoi looked at Kuroko adoringly, her eyes filled with joy and respect.

“It's a good thing that the question was very easy. Let's hurry to the next level.”

Kuroko also did not evade, and answered with a natural expression. After getting the stamp, he left the audio-visual room with Momoi.

It was this scene that touched on Aomine's cool.

"Damn it, can't keep playing!!"

"Ah, Aominecchi!?"

Looking at Aomine who suddenly roared, Kise's face paled. If he were to give up here, it would be very difficult to deal with it.

"Ah, um, Aominecchi, calm down!"

"How do you expect me to calm down! Kise, let's go!"

"Ah?"

"We definitely can not lose to Satsuki and Kuroko! We absolutely must get the right answer and chase after them!"

"Aominecchi..."

It seems that the outburst this time was heading to a good direction. Kise touched his chest, gave a thumbs up to encourage Aomine and said: "Aominecchi, let's do our best together!"

"Ah, come!"

Aomine had a high fighting spirit, and listened to the question intently.

However, no matter how focused he was, he couldn't answer-

In the end, it was at the last moment when they were given a bonus question, the two of them finally left the audio-visual room.

■

After the end of the previous two games, because a lot of teams were eliminated successively, or perhaps it was because they took a long time at the quiz session, Kuroko and Momoi had unexpectedly broke into the top ten.

The explanation of the third competition was being done in the second gymnasium. Inside the cubicles set up by the Riddle Society, the female student took several cards and spread them into a fan shape, and explained:

"Please choose a card."

Kuroko reached over and drew a card.

Flipping it over, there were the words:

'Please bravely rescue the shell.'

"Ah...?"

Even Kuroko was stunned after seeing the card. He completely didn't know its meaning.

Momoi, who was watching at the side, also gave a puzzled look to the Riddle Society's staff.

However, the girl said with a smile:

"The third game is a borrowing race. Please do your best."

"B-Borrowing race? This is the topic? Eh? What does 'rescue the shell' mean?"

"It means what it says."

"Ah?"

"In other words, this is your topic. Please bring an item that is the same as the topic back here."

The Riddle Society staff was still all smiles.

It seems that they really planned to let them use this topic to play the borrowing race.

"Seems that there are people in the Riddle Society who like cold jokes."

"Tetsu-kun, please don't use careless impressions to escape reality..."

Hearing Momoi's words, Kuroko coughed a little embarrassedly. It seems that her words were accurate.

"Let's go look for a shell. Let's see whether the simulation shops have any sea related shops. If we can get a shell from there even if it's taken out from the trash."

"That's right! But are there any sea related shops..."

Momoi started to think back on the simulation shops she went past in the early afternoon. Even after thinking for a long time, she can't think of a qualified place.

"Ah..."

She suddenly exclaimed.

"Have you thought of a store?"

Kuroko asked, filled with anticipation.

"Mm, you can't consider it as having thought of it..."

Momoi lightly tilted her head, and started to laugh a little embarrassedly.

"It's more like, I thought of what to do."

She told Kuroko her idea, Kuroko thought for a while and then nodded.

"I understand. Let's do that then."

"Ah, can we?"

"Nn. Like that, we should be able to complete 'this problem'."

"It probably won't be that easy..."

"It's only a game if there're some difficulties."

Seeing Kuroko smiling, Momoi's heart pounded: "Tetsu-kun who would go to any lengths to reach his goal is also very cool!"

Since it's already decided, it should be carried out immediately.

Momoi and Kuroko hurriedly entered the classroom block. Their target was the Astrology Society's 'Divination Division'.

Walking into the dark curtained classroom, the two of them immediately found their targeted person.

"Kuroko and Momoi? Why, are you both here for a divination?"

Midorima, who was sitting at a corner of the divination cubicle, looked at these two uninvited guests in surprise.

"Midorin, um..."

Momoi pretended that nothing had happened and approached Midorima.

"What is it? I don't want to have anything to do with you."

"Mm. That's true as well..."

Momoi stole a look at Kuroko who was standing behind her. Kuroko nodded in encouragement. No choice, just go. Momoi once again confirmed the item on the table in front of Midorima, then suddenly bowed her head.

"Midorin, I'm sorry!"

"Ah?"

Taking advantage of the moment when Midorima still had not reacted, Momoi took the conch shell lucky item that Midorima had put on the table, and turned around to give it to Kuroko.

"Hey!? What are you doing, Momoi! Return it to me, Kuroko!"

Midorima immediately reached over to grab, but was blocked by the table, and could only grab on empty air.

Kuroko, who had already escaped to the classroom door, turned around to look at Midorima.

"Midorima-kun, I'm sorry, I'll take this. If you want it back, come and catch me."

Even though his tone was very earnest, but the content was very confusing. Kuroko turned and ran off.

"Kurokoooo!?"

Midorima chased flusteredly, and ran out of the classroom. Momoi followed behind the two of them.

This is the 'bravely rescuing the shell (from Midorima's hands)' that Kuroko and Momoi thought of. If they could continue on like this and run to the second gymnasium, the task would be completed.

If this were the court, Midorima would have easily caught Kuroko, and the plan would of course be ruined in an instant. However, this was the corridor of the classroom block, and was even the peak time of the school festival. The corridors were packed with students and their parents. No matter what, Midorima was unable to catch Kuroko, who was skilled in blending in the crowd and weaving amongst them.

"What are you planning to do, Kuroko!"

"I'm planning to do a lot of things, but I can't tell you."

"You're really weird!"

"Anyway, it's 'if you have skills, come and catch me'."

“Ah~ Tetsu-kun’s so cool!!”

“Like hell he’s cool!”

The three of them were chasing each other while having a lively conversation.

While making sure that Midorima wouldn’t lose track of himself, Kuroko ran from the classroom block to the school compound. The second gymnasium was not far away. However, what was different with the school block was that once they were outside, the density of the crowd had reduced. Hence, the distance between Kuroko and Midorima was decreasing continuously.

“Kuroko, don’t overdo it!”

Midorima stretched out his right hand. Right when he was about to grab hold of Kuroko’s shoulder, Kuroko suddenly turned to the right, and disappeared in the shadows of the school block.

“Dammit, Kuroko!”

Midorima followed and turned right. However, a figure suddenly appeared from the corner, and he hurriedly stopped.

“You!?”

“...Eh? Mido-chin?”

The one who walked around the corner of the school block was Murasakibara. And he was still wearing the long dress.

“What kind of appearance is that, Murasakibara!”

Midorima’s expression seemed to be as though he saw a frog crushed to death by a car, and cried out loud.

“Ah? A long dress?”

Murasakibara tilted his head.

“I know it’s a long dress!”

“Eh, Mikkun? What are you doing here?”

Momoi who had managed to chase up was also a little surprised when she saw Murasakibara.

“I’m resting.”

“...You’re resting in those clothes?”

“Nn. It’s too troublesome to change my clothes.”

It seems even more troublesome to walk around dressed like that. Momoi thought.

“Sacchin and Mido-chin as well. What are you two doing here?”

Hearing Murasakibara’s question, Midorima came to his senses.

“That’s right! I’m looking for Kuroko!”

“Nn? Kuro-chin? Kuro-chin is right here.”

Murasakibara pointed behind himself.

“Ah.”

Kuroko, who was hiding at the shadows of Murasakibara’s long skirt, made a small noise.

“Kuroko! So you were here!”

Right when Midorima wanted to go behind Murasakibara, Kuroko escaped to Murasakibara’s front.

“Nn? What are you guys doing?”

These two were clearly using him as an axis to have an intense battle, but Murasakibara looked as though he was watching puppies playing, and had a laidback expression.

“Murasakibara! Move!”

“Ah?”

“Murasakibara-kun, please do not move.”

“Nn?”

Murasakibara opened his sleepy eyes, took a look at Kuroko, and then at Midorima. He was long bored of looking at the ongoing battle, and yawned.

However, at the next moment, Momoi’s one sentence made Murasakibara open his sleepy eyes wide.

“Mukkun! Stop Midorin for a while! I’ll treat you crêpe!”

“Nn!”

Murasakibara answered with unprecedented energy. He dashed at Midorima with his arms opened wide.

■

At the same time, Aomine and Kise finally broke through the second hurdle, and drew the card for the third game.

Aomine and Kise looked at the card, and both of them were puzzled.

On the card were the words 'Hero debut!'.

“Hero...?”

Use this topic to complete the borrowing race?“ ((oh which reminds me. i might be wrong with the translation of 'borrowing race', but i think you guys should know what it is by now...))

“Don’t know...”

Kise took the card, and shook it several times.

“The so called heroes, would it be like LeBron James?”

“How to bring him here!”

Aomine made a rare complaint to Kise, and the latter gave a bitter smile and said:

“That’s right. But since it has become like this, we should at least think of an idea...”

“Nn...”

Aomine and Kise who were the worst at using their minds folded their arms and thought, then they suddenly heard some noise and loud footsteps from afar.

“What’s going on?”

Aomine looked around.

The one who noticed first was Kise.

“Aominecchi, look at that...”

Kise pointed somewhere with a stiff face, and saw a group of strange people running to their direction.

The one running at the front was Kuroko. He was expressionless, but had a slight sense of anxiety. Also, the strangest was that he was like a rugby player, carrying a conch shell under his arm.

The one chasing at the back was Midorima.

“Stop right there, Kuroko!”

This one had a look of anger. Of course, Aomine and Kise did not know the reason. However, they could see that whenever Midorima was about to catch up to Kuroko, he’d be stopped by Murasakibara, his rage rising continuously.

The one running behind the both of them was Momoi, and Murasakibara who suddenly slowed down.

Murasakibara was carrying the hem of his skirt, walking side by side with Momoi who was running at full speed. Although he was wearing a long skirt, for Murasakibara, this speed was still no pressure.

“Ne, ne, Sacchin. My crêpe?”

He asked Momoi sentence after sentence. However, Momoi was desperately chasing behind Kuroko and the others, and had absolutely no strength to answer him.

“What are they doing...”

Aomine looked at the strange bunch of people, and froze at the spot.

However, seeing this, Kise seemed to have thought of something,

“Aominecchi, this is a chance!”

His eyes suddenly sparkled.

“Ah? Chance?”

“Blessings from the heavens!”

Kise shouted at the Riddle Society’s staff with a smile: “Pretty girl!”

“P-Pretty girl?”

The staff who was called such was shocked.

“Have a look at our answer to the borrowing race!”

Kise smiled and gave her a quick wink.

“Oi, Kise. What answer?”

“I have my way.” Kise proudly explained to the confused Aomine.

“Anyway, when they come over, Aominecchi your duty is to grab hold of Kurokocchi and Midorimacchi.”

“Ah?”

Although he still didn’t understand, Aomine’s habit was to act before thinking. He very quickly got into position, waiting to catch Kuroko and the others.

Of course, Kuroko and the others completely did not know those two’s plan. He was only using all his effort to run towards the Riddle Society’s third game cubicle.

While running, Kuroko suddenly raised the conch shell in his hands to his head. Midorima who was chasing behind him hurriedly went into standby. Who knew that Kuroko did nothing, but continued to run.

“What is he doing!”

Kuroko’s every move was completely exceeding Midorima’s understanding.

However, one person understood.

It was the girl who was in charge of the third Riddle Society competition.

She looked at the conch shell held in Kuroko’s hand, and nodded with a smile.

“Bravely rescued the shell.”

Their team managed to complete the requirement of the borrowing race. The girl took the stamp, and waited for Kuroko to go over. Upon seeing this, Momoi, who was behind Kuroko, gave a sigh. It seems that this hurdle was safely passed.

When he was about to run to the front of the cubicle, Kuroko slowed down, and in the next second Midorima caught his arm.

“Kuroko, just give up! Return the lucky item to me!”

“Ah, alright. I’ll return it to you.”

“Ah?”

Midorima had originally thought that he would meet resistance, who knew that Kuroko had instead obediently returned the conch shell to him.

“Here. Thank you.”

“You!? What are you guys doing!? Kuroko! Do you know what you have done!”

Midorima furiously grabbed the front of Kuroko’s shirt. From his point of view, he felt played by Kuroko.

Momoi who was chasing from behind hurriedly went between the two of them.

“Midorin, calm down a bit! We have a reason for doing this!”

“Then tell me, what’s your reason!”

“Uh, this is because...”

Momoi couldn’t help but shift around her line of sight. If she were to tell him that it was in order to complete the ‘topic for the borrowing race’, she’s afraid that Midorima would be unable to accept it.

Murasakibara, who was beside Momoi, didn’t interrupt either, and silently watched the developments with squinted, sleepy eyes.

“Say it, Momoi!”

“Um...”

While Midorima was raging, Momoi was racking her brains for the suitable words, but was suddenly lightly grabbed on the wrist by someone.

Nn?“

Could it be Tetsu-kun!?

Her heart rose to the faint expectation, and looked at the one who was grabbing her wrist.

"Eh... Ki-chan?"

“Momoicchi, caught you guys!”

Kise smiled at Momoi. His right hand was grabbing onto Momoi, his left hand was holding onto Murasakibara’s arm.

“Nn? What is it?”

Murasakibara also looked on unbelievably at his wrist getting grabbed, and tilted his head.

“Hey, Kise. Caught them.”

Hearing Aomine’s voice, Momoi looked over, and found Aomine wringing both arms around Kuroko’s and Midorima’s neck, causing both of them to be unable to move.

Kuroko was a little puzzled, and scratched his cheek, Midorima immediately turned around to glare at Aomine.

“Aomine, what are you doing!”

However, Aomine completely ignored Midorima’s roars.

“Kise, after this what do we do?”

He urged.

“Good job, Aominecchi!”

Kise praised. Midorima remained there shouting: “I said, what are you guys planning!” But was magnificently ignored. Kise shouted to the Riddle Society staff: “Pretty girl! It’s gathered!”

“Ah?”

The girl who was somewhat dumbfounded by the scene in front of her was suddenly called out with a shout, she turned around to look at Kise, and didn't really react. Kise said loudly:

"Hero debut!"

While he spoke, he lifted both arms high to make a banzai gesture. Of course, Momoi and Murasakibara who were grabbed by him also raised their arms.

"Ah?"

Like the girl who was stunned there, Momoi also blinked dazedly, and looked at Kise.

The remaining four people also looked at Kise, and silently asked him to explain.

Kise, who was at the centre of everyone's sight, smiled, and said:

"Wouldn't the six of us gathered together be 'power rangers'? Blue ranger Aominecchi, black ranger Kurokocchi, green ranger Midorimacchi, purple ranger Murasakibaracchi. And the rose among the thorns, pink ranger Momoicchi! Look, we're all here, right!" ((i'm not sure whether 彩色战士 really means power rangers, but i thought that it'd be cute to have it in LOL))

Kise let go of Momoi and Murasakibara's arm, and raised a thumb.

"I see. Then Kise is the yellow ranger."

The very adaptable Kuroko was the first to express his understanding.

"Like hell 'I see'. What are you doing."

Aomine froze at the spot, and let go of Midorima and Kuroko.

"Kise, you bastard! Don't take your joke too far! *cough cough*" ((um i'm not sure whether to put it as 'dont take your joke too far ahem/cough/cough cough!' etc (since it'd be closer to the chi translations) but i thought that this way would be more accurate. idk... OTL))

Midorima finally roared until his throat couldn't bear it.

As for Murasakibara,

"Sacchin Sacchin, my crêpe?"

He has long lost interest in the power rangers.

"How's that, pretty girl?"

Kise asked again, and the dumbfounded girl finally came to her senses, and looked at the six again.

"Passed."

She picked up the stamp.

"That's great!"

Kise and Aomine clenched their fists in celebration.

Like that, the third competition, Kuroko and Momoi, Aomine and Kise, these two groups almost passed at the same

time.

■

“I don’t want to have anything to do with you all!!”

After the end of the third competition, Midorima threw these few words, and fled to the Astrology Society’s classroom.

Murasakibara also briskly left after getting Momoi’s Creamy ☆Crêpe coupon.

However, these matters were considered unimportant to Kuroko and the others.

The two groups chased each other to the final competition, the fourth competition’s venue•the multipurpose hall.

“The fourth competition is a maze. Please depart.”

The Riddle Society staff easily explained, and opened the multipurpose hall’s door.

Momoi who had aggressively dashed inside, was shocked after having a look at the interior.

The multipurpose hall was pitch black, and there were merely several dim, bluish-white lights shining at the road at their feet. The BGM put on inside the hall was also inexplicably weird.

“Um, this is...”

Momoi froze there, and looked around to the staff. “You say it’s a maze, but this seems more like a haunted house...”

“That’s right. This is a haunted house themed maze.”

The staff informed calmly.

“Eh...”

Momoi’s face became ashen.

“Momoi-san, what’s wrong?”

Kuroko asked quietly. However, the one who answered for Momoi was Aomine.

“Ah, Satsuki is very scared of haunted houses.”

“Nn? Is that true, Momoi-san?”

“Uh... Nn.”

Since Kuroko had already asked such, it’s not good to tell a lie. However, Momoi didn’t want to make him worried, and purposely pretended to be calm and smiled, saying:

“But it’s alright! I will do my best!”

“Is it really alright...?”

Kuroko looked at her worriedly. However, Aomine and Kise both went past them from their side, and entered the maze.

“Then we’ll go ahead first.”

“Bye bye!”

Once entering the maze, there are three branches in the road, Aomine and Kise chose the middle path.

The fact that the two of them had pre-empted made Momoi pick herself up.

Think of your own intentions... Momoi said to herself.

Even though she was invited by Kuroko to join the rally competition, but Momoi had her own ambitions as well.

I must win, and then welcome a happy ending with Kuroko!

“Tetsu-kun! Let’s also go in quickly!”

Momoi said firmly. Kuroko was a little surprised at the suddenly revitalized Momoi, and answered: “Alright.” The two of them chose the right path.

I must win. Although Momoi’s heart was burning again with fighting spirit, but walking into the dark haunted house, and seeing the spirits appear screaming again and again, this fighting spirit became weaker and weaker.

Even if she wanted to revive her spirit and continue on forward, but the fear from her bottom of her heart kept stimulating her imagination. Would there be something appearing after that corner. After this would something fall from the ceiling. The imagination made Momoi’s steps heavier and heavier.

At the moment when Momoi didn’t want to move forward anymore, Kuroko who was beside her suddenly spoke:

“Momoi-san.”

“Ah!! W-What is it!?”

Even Kuroko’s voice had given her a scare, Momoi somewhat hated that about herself, she looked at Kuroko.“

"Thinking about some things that are unrelated to this right now would be better."

“Ah...?”

“Like that, you’ll reach the exit very quickly.”

Even though it was unclear in the dim light, Kuroko seemed to have smiled.

Could it be, he’s worrying about me...?

Momoi’s heart was a little warm. Kuroko’s good point was that he could seemingly inadvertently care about you.

“That said...” Kuroko seemed to have remembered something, and said: “Murasakibara-kun just called you ‘Sacchin’ right. I remember that last time he called you ‘Momo-chin’ right...?”

“Tetsu-kun, you noticed!?”

Never thought that such a small change would be noticed by Kuroko, Momoi was very happy. Even though it was a small matter that wasn’t eye-catching, but he could notice problems that were related to her, this was enough to make Momoi elated.

“That was me requesting Mukkun. I asked him to change how he calls me.””

"To change 'Momo-chin' to 'Sacchin'?"

“No. Actually I wanted him to call me 'Momoi' or 'Satsuki’...”

Here, Momoi sighed. The reason she hoped Murasakibara would change the way he called her, was mainly because the word 'chin' made her a little embarrassed, but Murasakibara seemed to not really understand, and finally changed it to 'Sacchin'.

“Mukkun is very difficult to communicate with...”

“Because Murasakibara-kun is very special. It’s very difficult to try and change his way of acting.”

“That’s true. Not only Mukkun, the others have their own way of acting as well.”

“Midorima-kun has the most.”

“True. Midorin’s rules are too many.”

Momoi couldn’t help but chuckle out loud. After chatting with Kuroko for a while, she seemed to not be that scared anymore.

Perhaps she could bear like this until the exit.

Just when Momoi was thinking such.

Smack.

Something touched her neck, the feeling was indescribable. However, it was the same of the feeling Momoi hated the most-

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!”

To be attacked when unguarded, this kind of fear made Momoi’s hair stand on her end, and she suddenly panicked.

“Ah, f-frog! There’s a frog! Nooooooooo!!”

Momoi frantically touched around her neck, attempting to slap away the thing that touched her neck. It was as if she was barefooted on burning hot tar, jumping around in circles.

“Momoi-san!?”

The sudden changes made Kuroko not know what to do, and looked at her at a loss.

“Ah, hurry and take it off, nooooo! Ah!”

Momoi who was jumping around on tiptoes suddenly lost her balance, and slipped forwards.

“Momoi-san!”

Momoi had no time to protect her head with her hands, and could only acceptingly close her eyes.

“...Eh?”

The expected impact didn’t arrive. Momoi thought that she would definitely come into contact with the cold floor.

She bumped into a person, through the clothes the warm temperature of the skin could be felt.

Also, in order to calm her down, the hand that was gently patting her back. Her brain had yet to react, but her body was already burning up.

Could it be... Momoi thought to herself.

Could it be, it's Tetsu-kun hugging me!?

It's nothing unexpected. The current situation can only be that possibility. In order to save herself that was about to fall down, Kuroko came forward, and cushioned under her body.

Her heard pounded wildly, as though it could be heard even a dozen meters away.

What should the next step be.

Should it be to stand up, or to remain in his embrace.

Kuroko's hand kept gently patting Momoi's back.

Momoi decided. First say thanks before doing anything. Momoi raised her face slightly.

"U-Um, thank you, Tetsu-kun..."

"...Sorry to disappoint, I'm not Tetsu."

"Ah?"

Momoi completely raised her head, and found out that the one in front of her was a familiar face. At the moment of seeing this face,

"Go awayyyyyyyyyyyy!"

A shriek, at the same time shooting her hands out.

Slap! Momoi gave a slap on Aomine's face, the sound ringing out.

"Owww!! Satsuki what are you doing!"

Aomine touched the face that got hit, and stared at Momoi.

Momoi jumped up as though shocked by electric, and kept her distance from Aomine.

"A-A-Aomine-kun! Why is it you!?"

"Um, Momoi-san, are you alright?"

"Ah!?"

Momoi turned around, and found that Kuroko was standing behind her.

"Te-T-T-Tetsu-kun!? Eh, strange!? E-Eh? What's going on!?"

Kuroko scratched his cheek a little embarrassedly.

"Um, where should I start explaining?"

"Don't mention where to start first, Satsuki, apologize to me first! It's my loss that I saved you."

Aomine said as he rubbed his cheek while standing up.

"However, the reason why Momoicchi would slip is ultimately Aominecchi's fault..."

Kise said as he appeared from the shadows behind Aomine.

“Ki-chan!? Nn? What? What are you talking about!?”

Seeing Momoi froze there with wide eyes, Kuroko bent down, and picked up the square object on the floor and said:

“It’s like this... It’s all its fault.”

“...Konjac?”

Momoi said confusedly. What Kuroko had picked up was very common konjac.

“Aomine-kun used this to touch Momoi-san’s neck.”

“...Ah? This?”

Momoi recalled. Indeed, hearing what he said, the thing that had touched her neck really seemed like konjac. It’s only her blind assumption that it was her most hated frog, and thus fell into a panic.

“But, you’re too much also, right, why would you use that to touch me!?”

Momoi looked at Aomine with reproachful eyes, Aomine then grumbled with a pout: “Because isn’t using konjac to touch people in a haunted house an expected thing?”

“That’s right, that’s right. Aominecchi also got a shock.”

“You shut up, Kise!”

Aomine knocked Kise’s head.

“Could it be... Because you’re not happy that you got scared, so you purposely use konjac to scare me!?”

“That’s right, that’s right. As expected of a childhood friend! You really understand Aominecchi too much.”

“I already told you to shut up...”

Aomine was prepared to knock on Kise’s head, when the konjac flew towards his face.

‘Smack’.

The konjac that suddenly flew over stunned Aomine, then the konjac slowly slid down his face.

And what appeared after the konjac, was Momoi in a pitching position.

“I really can’t believe it! How awful! How can you be like this!”

Momoi straightened her body, her long hair fluttering, and looked at Aomine patronisingly.

“Aomine-kun you idiot idiot idiot idiot idiot idiot idiot idiot!”

Momoi scolded several times in one breath, Aomine was suppressed and didn’t dare retort.

“I will absolutely not lose to you! Let’s go, Tetsu-kun!”

Momoi turned around swiftly, and walked towards the inner part of the maze.

Her anger had caused her to no longer feel afraid of the ghosts.

“Ah? Please wait, Momoi-san.”

Kuroko, who was also stunned like Aomine, hurriedly chased after her.

“...What are you laughing for.”

Aomine finally spoke. Kise's appearance of standing there trying to fight back a smile was making him unhappy.

“N-No, Momoicchi's really, t-too cute... Pfft!”

Kise held his stomach and covered his mouth, using up all his strength to not laugh.

“...How's she cute, that ugly woman!”

Aomine purposely said in a voice where Momoi could hear.

At the next moment.

Smack.

His face met the attack from the konjac for the second time today.

Momoi, who was walking in front, had just came across a hanging konjac. It could only be said that Aomine was too unlucky.

“What is it, Aomine you idiot! Stupid! Simple minded blockhead!”

After Momoi finished scolding, she stuck her tongue out at him and made a face .

Kise finally couldn't help but laugh out loud.

“Ahahahahaha! Can't! I'm laughing to death! Ahahahahaha!”

“Shut up! Don't laugh anymore, Kise!”

Aomine threw the konjac towards Kise.

“Whoa! Aominecchi, what are you doing!”

“You're laughing too much! You're still not moving!”

“Ah?”

“I must win, and show it to them!”

Aomine clenched his fist, burning up a raging fighting spirit.

The latter half of the fourth match. The childhood friends were having a raging war.

■

Basically, if Momoi and Aomine, who both have extraordinary abilities, were to be serious, this maze was not worth mentioning.

Momoi used the size of the multipurpose hall, as well as the path that the both of them had went, in order to determine their position, and then went to the direction of the presumed exit.

On the other side, Aomine completely used his instinct to find the exit.

The ones who exited the maze first were Momoi and Kuroko.

“You’ve worked hard.”

Outside the multipurpose hall, the Riddle Society staff gave them a stamp. Like that, they have collected four stamps. What was unexpected was, the Riddle Society staff told them a good news.

“You are the first team to get through.”

It seems, they had beaten the very first team inside the maze.

“The win is right ahead.”

Kuroko smiled faintly.

This smile made Momoi’s heart pound again. She was finally about to welcome the happy ending with Kuroko.

Her anger had filled her mind with ‘I must win against Aomine’, but once she saw this smile, her heart immediately switched to ‘The happy ending with Tetsu-kun’.

“L-Let’s do our best. Tetsu-kun!”

“Alright.”

The target was the second playground which was the final destination. The riddle society staff let them ‘be the same as the start, go back to the final point in three-legged style’, so Momoi and Kuroko strapped their legs together again.

“Then, we’ll first use the outer leg...”

Just as the two of them were about to go according to Kuroko’s instructions, with a snap, the doors to the multipurpose hall opened again.

No way, Momoi turned around, in the end she was right. Aomine and Kise had come out of the maze.

“Ah! Tetsu, Satsuki! Don’t move!”

“Eh, they’ve pre-empted.”

Having two people with completely different reactions right behind them, Momoi and Kuroko hurriedly left the place.

The multipurpose hall was not far from the second playground. Kuroko and Momoi tried their hardest to choose the easiest path, dashing out from the crowded school blocks, and headed to their goal.

Because it’s the second three-legged race, the speed was much faster than earlier. At the first game, Momoi was still nervous at being so close to Kuroko that she only paid attention to her feet, but now she could raise her head and shout out the counting with Kuroko.

“One two one, one two one, one two one.”

While setting their tempo, the both of them started running briskly.

Their faces were all smiles. Shouting the counting together could actually make them happy. Their hearts were a little happy, and also a little prickly.

However, this smile didn't last for long. Aomine and Kise were chasing furiously from behind.

The four entered the second playground.

Even so, Kuroko and Momoi were still leading.

"One two one, one two one!"

Kuroko and Momoi slowly increased their rhythm.

"Kise! Run faster a little!"

"Damn, this is already the limit!"

In order to meet with Aomine's demands, Kise bit down and pedalled hard into the ground. He understood very clearly, he couldn't compete with Aomine even in running. However, he didn't wish to drag Aomine down. Not only towards Aomine, towards the large gap between the both of them.

The finishing line was within sight, it was the 'Rally competition' banner hung between the trees.

There was only a slight gap between the two teams, in the end it would be a tied first.

At this point, the four of them were under the large banner, there was still a step away from the finishing line.

However, a tied first wasn't their desired result.

Aomine and Kise dashed forward with a breath.

"!"

Kuroko and Momoi's face flashed with disappointment, Aomine and Kise were smiling, waiting for the incoming victory.

At that moment.

"Rumbleeeee!"

A rumbling sound came from below their feet, at the next moment, the four of them were pulled up by an incredible force.

"What!?"

Momoi didn't even have the time to scream. The other three were the same. The four of them were suspended in the air.

A large net had caught them, and was hanging the four of them between the trees.

In the narrow net, Momoi and the others had their bodies stacked together, and were trying to come up of ways to escape.

However, not only was the space narrow, but because it was very unstable when hanging in the air, they were unable to move.

"Never expected for there to be a trap set up at the last step..."

Kuroko said aloud in surprise.

“Damn, I had a bad feeling!”

Aomine bemoaned.

“Why didn’t you dodge like earlier!”

Kise sighed a little vexedly.

“What could I do, who knew that they would actually set a trap at the finishing line!”

“Oi, Aomine-kun, don’t shout next to my ear...!”

Momoi wriggled to distance herself from him. “Isn’t it because Kise...!” Aomine was about to argue, but at the corner of his eye he saw a scene and kept quiet.

A boy and girl couple were going below the four that were suspended.

“””””Ah...”””””

The four of them gaped with mouth wide open.

After that, they stared at the couple passing by the finish line.

“First place!”

The president of the Riddle Society announced the result of the competition with a loud voice through the microphone.

At the same time, colourful streamer cannons were released surrounding the finishing line.

The one who got first was a third year boy and girl couple. The both were happily jumping among the floating streamers, praising each other for their wonderful performance. “How can it be...”

Suspended in the net, Momoi helped the other three to let out a sorrowful wail.

At the ground, an even more unbelievable event happened.

“I’ve always liked you a lot! After today I’ll like you more and more! Please go out with me!”

The third year boy confessed to his female partner.

The crowd that were cheering for these champions suddenly kept quiet.

The four suspended in the air also could not help but silently and anticipately watch the developments.

The boy was blushing like a grilled octopus, his eyes were a little teary, uneasily waiting for the girl’s answer.

Under the surrounding crowd’s gaze, the girl was red, but slowly nodded.

At the next moment, the finishing line was drowned by cheers. OF course, this was even louder than the cheers of celebrating victory earlier.

Momoi and the others were suspended in the net, and quietly watched this scene.

■

“Eh, it’s just a bit more...”

“Really such a shame...”

After being rescued from the final trap at the finishing point, Momoi and Kuroko were sitting together on a bench at the second playground, drinking their consolation prize juice from a straw.

The second playground already had contestants arriving at the finishing line one after another.

Aomine and Kise were not there. After being rescued, they had disappeared some place.

It was clearly the long awaited win, but after the final scene of confession, Momoi already had no idea, and sighed: “Eh, nevermind.”

However, Kuroko seemed to be unsatisfied, he quietly muttered: “I thought that I could at least get those pair of shoes.” Momoi looked at him in surprise.

“How rare, Tetsu-kun. You would actually be so obsessed with that pair of basketball shoes. Do you like LeBron?”

As far as Momoi was aware, Kuroko’s personality was to be relatively indifferent towards that kind of thing. There’s also nothing that he particularly want. It was unexpected that he actually cared so much for that prize of shoes.

However, Kuroko’s answer was even more unexpected.

“No, I’m not really interested in basketball shoes.”

“Ah? Then why do you want them?”

“...As a gift of thanks.”

Kuroko seemed to become embarrassed. Momoi’s heart jumped, she held back the joy soaring and asked:

“For who?”

“Aomine-kun.”

“Why is it him??”

She never expected that Kuroko would actually mention the name of her childhood friend, and Momoi was a little confused. Recalling to their daily interactions, it’s still understandable for Aomine to want to thank Kuroko, but why would Kuroko want to thank Aomine.

Momoi encountered the hardest question of the day, after thinking for half a day, she gave up.

“Tetsu-kun, can you explain it?”

Hearing Momoi’s request, Kuroko narrowed his eyes nostalgically and said:

“For me to be able to play basketball now, it’s because of Aomine-kun.”

On the first day, third string Kuroko who had felt the limits of his own strength, had thought of wanting to give up basketball.

Because no matter how much effort he put in, he couldn’t see the results.

He was fed up, and wanted to escape from basketball.

However, Aomine stopped him.

"In a team, no player is unnecessary."

He had said that to him.

Aomine had said to the third string him: "Let's stand on the same court and play one day."

The tone was firm, with not the slightest hint of doubt. These words made Kuroko regain the courage to face basketball again.

"Now, I can be a regular, and play with everyone, I'm really very happy. That's why, I sometimes would think, at that time, it's really great that I didn't give up basketball."

He had long known that Aomine really wanted a pair of LeBron basketball shoes, Hence, when he knew of the prize of the competition, he did not hesitate to plan to give them to Aomine.

"However, when Aomine-kun said he wanted to join the rally competition, i was really nervous. After all, I wish to be able to win the shoes with my own strength, and then give them to him myself..."

Kuroko seemed to have become a little embarrassed, and scratched his cheek.

"I see..."

After speaking, Momoi lowered her eyes and kept quiet. She fingered the corner of the paper cup somewhat lonesomely.

"Momoi-san..."

Hearing Kuroko's voice, Momoi raised her head, and started smiling a little deliberately.

"...It's nice to be a boy."

"Nn?"

"Friendship, getting worried... I'm a little envious of you all."

Momoi looked up, the clouds that were floating in the sky were dyed orange.

It was already evening. The joyful school festival was about to end.

To feel a little lonely, is probably because the school festival was about to end.

To feel a little happy, is probably because today was a fulfilling day.

Or perhaps, both was the truth, or the both were lies.

Momoi thought in her heart.

"Momoi-san?"

Seeing Momoi suddenly keep quiet, Kuroko looked at here strangely and asked: "What is it?"

"Nothing. Just thinking that today's ending just like that."

Momoi used her usual smile to look at him. Hearing Kuroko say:

"Mn, that's true..."

He raised his head and quietly watched the sunset at the horizon.

After a while, Kuroko turned towards Momoi.

“Momoi-san, are you free now?”

“Ah? Mn... What is it?”

“As thanks to you for accompanying me today, I want to introduce my secret place.”

“Place? Secret?”

“Nn. How about it?”

Kuroko gave a meaningful smile. Of course, Momoi didn't have a reason to refuse.

“Of course, let's go and see!”

“Then it's decided.” After that, the both of them stood up.

“What, the both of you are still here!”

Both hands holding a box containing a large portion of fried noodles, Aomine and Kise appeared. It seemed that they had both ate and drank a lot to comfort their wounded hearts.

“Tetsu-kun. Want to bring the both of them?”

“That's fine as well. Let's all go.”

Seeing Momoi and Kuroko talk to themselves, Aomine and Kise confusedly asked: “What?”

■

The secret place Kuroko mentioned, seemed to be located on the rooftop of the old school block. After Kuroko opened the door with familiar moves, Momoi and the others followed him to the rooftop.

“Can we enter in here...?”

Momoi was a little confused, but Aomine and Kise were looking around with interest. Kuroko didn't answer, but walked ahead by himself.

“Everyone, over here.”

He beckoned to the other three.

“Tetsu-kun, just what is this...”

The remaining words were held back.

Momoi walked to Kuroko's side, revelling in the scenery in front of them. Aomine and Kise were the same.

“This is my favourite scenery. I think, the people who know of this place, is probably only myself.”

What Kuroko wanted them to appreciate, was the streetscape at sunset.

The scenery from the fourth floor, was different from the view of the street that they were accustomed to.

Eyes chasing after the streetlights that were lighting up one after another, into the sunset, the few construction cranes in the distance were only a vague silhouette, as though they were brachiosaurus.

The sunset slowly sank between the tall buildings.

Kuroko and the others quietly watched the scene.

While creating light, it also resulted in shadows. The sun finished its task for the day.

"I really like this time."

The three of them looked at the scenery, and heard Kuroko's voice.

"After the sun set, there is still a glimmer of light on the ground during this time."

The air was silently changing colour.

The city that was dyed red by the setting sun became a piece of pale cyan world.

Momoi was intoxicated with the slightly changing view in front of her.

"Really beautiful..."

"Yeah, it's awesome..."

Even Aomine was focusing on the beautiful scenery, as though it wouldn't be enough even to look at it forever.

Momoi stole a glance at Aomine, and said next to Kuroko's ear:

"That's great, Tetsu-kun. Aomine-kun seems to really like it here."

"Is it, that's great."

Kuroko smiled happily. Momoi lowered her voice again and said:

"Even though it isn't basketball shoes, but it's also considered a gift."

"Nn...?"

Kuroko suddenly looked at Momoi.

Momoi smiled and said: "Don't you think so?"

Into the gradually cyan dyed air, a clear smile emerged from Kuroko's face.

"Thank you."

This sentence gave a slight quiver to the air-

And then gradually faded away into the faint ocean coloured streetscape.



めあすは...
とすがの青峰も燃えることなく、その光景を見つめている

AnimeMangaDaisuki, Kuroko no Basuke -Replace II- novel G2 English...



animemangadaisuki.tumblr.com/post/55613364036/kuroko-no-basuke-replace-ii-novel-g2-english

- sorry for the long wait guys! here is the 2nd chapter from replace 2
- read translated knb replace 1/2/3 [HERE](#)
- on the side notes replace 4 is coming out this October!

Midorima's unlucky day

.....

"Man proposes, God disposes."

This means: "To assume a state of mind in which you do everything that is humanly possible and then entrust the final outcome to fate." Furthermore, if you extrapolate upon this proverb, it can also be interpreted to mean: "If you give your best effort, results will naturally follow."

Midorima Shintarou, who maintains this proverb as his personal creed so that he will be chosen by fate, lives a systematic daily life based on extraordinary effort and superstition. He thereby does everything in his power to succeed.

He is especially conscientious where superstition is concerned.

In the morning, he always begins by putting on his glasses using only his right hand. At night, after lying down once on his futon, he gets up again, stretches, dons his nightcap, and goes to sleep. Midorima forces himself to follow this extreme, peculiar lifestyle.

And sometimes, in order to abide by these superstitions, he finds himself in situations like the present one.

This happened on a certain morning. When Midorima awoke, he reached for his glasses with his right hand, just as he always did.

"...hm?" Midorima questioned softly, still lying in his futon.

His right hand brushed against the fabric of the futon instead of closing around his glasses.

With his right hand, he searched the surrounding area for his glasses, but they were nowhere to be found.

"What's going on...?" Midorima muttered, irritated. He sat up and fixed his gaze on the place where his glasses should have been.

On a normal day, his glasses would have been sitting by the side of his pillow, but now, they had disappeared without a trace.

"Hm...?"

Midorima raised his eyebrows and cast a glance about the area around his futon. However, he saw nothing that resembled a pair of glasses.



“Nn...?”

Now he was concerned with an entirely different problem.

How had he been able to determine, with extreme ease, that his glasses were not anywhere in the vicinity?

At the same time this question arose, Midorima touched his right cheek with his right hand.

Something clinked beneath his fingertips. It was a familiar sensation.

His glasses.

“I forgot to take them off...”

Midorima couldn't help but sigh.

Thinking back, he remembered that he had had trouble falling asleep the night before, so he had started counting the wood grains in the ceiling. Apparently, he had fallen asleep while counting, and as a result, he had worn his glasses all night long.

Fortunately, since Midorima seldom moved in his sleep, he hadn't dropped his glasses and crushed them with his body.

Incidentally, with regard to this particular characteristic of Midorima's, Takao had said, “You sleep on your back all night long without so much as a twitch! That's seriously freaky! And you have too many superstitions! Way too many!”

Takao had teased Midorima about it when they shared a room during the summer training camp. However, this morning, thanks to Midorima's sleeping posture, he had been able to protect his precious glasses. So the teasing was completely unwarranted, and perhaps being able to sleep without moving was a quality Midorima should be proud of. In any case, he had clearly made a mistake by falling asleep while wearing his glasses. *How could I do such a thing...?*, he wondered as he prodded his furrowed brow with a fingertip.

He glanced at the clock and realized that it was past the time he had planned to wake up. The phrase “I'm late because I overslept” was not in Midorima's dictionary.

Midorima immediately moved to get out of his futon. But when he planted his left hand on the floor and rose to one knee—

“!!”

Just as if an electric current had coursed through him, his entire body stiffened, and he lost his balance. As his body pitched forward, he braced his right hand on the futon and was somehow able to catch himself before he fell.

Midorima froze in that position as a feeling of despair washed over him.

A bead of cold sweat rolled down his cheek.

And then he realized the problem, which was something he should never have been able to overlook.

And that problem was—

“I didn't use my right hand to put on my glasses this morning...!”

As he stared into empty space, this single sentence fell from his lips. The grave tone of his voice signified that this was indeed a dire problem.

One could argue that since he had first *touched* his glasses with his right hand, that could perhaps be interpreted as “using his right hand to put on his glasses”. This controversy gave rise to a great deal of debate (within the realm of Midorima’s thoughts).

Moreover, it was morning. He would have to leave for school in a little while, so solving this problem was a race against the clock. Worrying about the situation would not grant him an extension.

“Urgh, I guess I don’t have a choice...!”

Mindful of the time, Midorima, who had reached this decision in less than a second, began to execute the best plan out of all the countermeasures he had devised.

That plan was as follows:

“I’ve got to go back to bed again!”

He laid his head back on his pillow. He had concluded that the only way to fulfill the first superstition of the morning was to get back in bed and repeat the process of getting up.

He placed his glasses beside his pillow and closed his eyes. If he could repeat the process within a reasonable amount of time, it would be just as if he had awoken according to schedule.

But Midorima promptly sat up again.

“If I’m going back to bed, then I have to redo my stretches!”

He slipped out of his futon, performed his stretches, adjusted his nightcap, and crawled back into his futon a second time.

Thus, having fulfilled the conditions of his pre-bedtime superstitions, Midorima rose once more and deliberately put on his glasses by using his right hand.

At first glance, this string of preparations might appear to be meaningless. However, as far as Midorima was concerned, it was all part of doing everything in his power. In order to be chosen by fate, Midorima had accepted the fact that such efforts and hardships were necessary.

But fate is always ready to impose unexpected trials upon us.

- - - - -

It was a certain day in October.

On this day, just like any other, Midorima put on his glasses with his right hand, finished getting ready in his room, and entered the living room. After greeting his mother, who was standing in the kitchen, he sat down at the table where breakfast was ready and waiting, then checked to see that the television was on.

The show currently airing was, of course, “Oha Asa”.

His timing was perfect. Right on schedule, the daily horoscope segment was just beginning.

The announcer presented the horoscope and today’s lucky item for each astrological sign in sequential order.

“Up next—Cancer! Cancers should take great care today!”

Midorima, who had been eating his breakfast while ignoring the other horoscopes, suddenly fixed his eyes on the

screen.

"You could experience some unexpected events today, so make sure to carry your lucky item with you at all times!"

Midorima focused on the television so as not to miss a single word.

"The lucky item for Cancers is a red..."

"Red"? Midorima instantly called to mind all of the red-colored goods in his possession. He waited to hear the next words.

"And now, let's check in with Saitou-saaan!!"

"Pffft—!"

At the sudden shock, Midorima spit out the rice he had been chewing and stared blankly at the television with his mouth hanging open.

On the screen was not the "Oha Asa" horoscope segment he was accustomed to seeing. Instead, the screen displayed an image of an unfamiliar place. It was clearly a different channel.

"W-what's going on?!"

Midorima frantically searched for the remote control. Everyone in his family knew that he watched "Oha Asa" religiously. There was no way one of them would have changed the channel.

Then who was responsible?

As Midorima scanned the room, looking for the remote control, his eyes fell upon an unfamiliar object atop the low table in front of the television set. He froze in place.

"Where the heck did you come from?!"

There, with one paw poised on the remote control that lay on the low table, staring up at Midorima with an adorable expression on its face, was a black cat.

"Meooow."

Midorima had not noticed before, but the window looking out onto the garden was open, the curtains fluttering in the breeze. It appeared that a stray cat had wandered in from outside.

The cat meowed at him again, nimbly crossed the room, and hopped up on the table where the morning meal was laid out.

"Do you know what you've just done?!"

Overcome by anger, Midorima reached out a hand to grab the cat.

But the cat easily dodged his outstretched hand, snatched up the piece of salmon that had been part of Midorima's breakfast, and leapt down from the table.

"What?! You thieving cat! You stole my precious breakfast!! Get back here!!"

But the cat could not understand human speech, of course, and it would not have stopped even if it *had* understood.

The cat exited through the open window and vanished in an instant.

"This is why I hate cats!" Midorima said in disgust before returning his attention to the television.

Even if he were to change the channel back, the "Oha Asa" horoscope segment would have already ended.

"How could this happen..." Midorima groaned to himself.

The fact that he had failed to hear the day's lucky item was a serious affair.

Internally, Midorima desperately sought a solution to this problem.

Should he look at the "Oha Asa" homepage? (No, the results of the daily horoscopes were never posted on the web site.)

Should he try to guess today's lucky item based on data from previous days? (It was no use. He had determined many times before that there was no predictable pattern behind the lucky items that were chosen.)

Should he ask someone? (He couldn't stand the thought of asking someone else, so he gave up on that idea.)

Midorima bit his lip. He couldn't think of a single good idea. Now that things had come to this, there was only possible choice he could make.

Midorima balled his hands into fists, hurried through the rest of his breakfast, and returned to his room.

- - - - -

"Whoa, Shin-chan, what happened to you?!" Takao Kazunari exclaimed in surprise upon seeing Midorima enter the classroom.

"It's nothing. There's nothing wrong."

Looking extremely sullen, Midorima removed his uniform jacket and sat down at his desk.

"Uh-uh, no way. That's obviously not true. I mean, look at you, you're sweating bullets."

Takao, whose desk was in front of Midorima's, turned around in his chair so that he was facing backwards. With an amused expression, he watched Midorima mop the sweat from his brow.

"We didn't have practice this morning, so did you hop in the sauna or something? What're you, some old guy?"

"Why on earth would I do a thing like that?!"

Midorima glared daggers at Takao, but Takao didn't seem bothered in the slightest and instead smiled cheerfully back at him.

"Okay, so what happened, then?"

"...why would I tell someone who is obviously enjoying this?"

"Whaaat? Shin-chan's such a meanie~!"

"Cut it out. That's disgusting."

"Hey, now, what's the matter? C'mon, tell me."

"..."

Midorima thought for a moment and finally gave a long sigh.

Rather than further complicate matters, he decided that it would be less of a hassle if he were to simply explain the situation.

With a sigh, he said, "Got snagged by a truck."

"What?"

Takao's almond-shaped eyes went wide.

"Got snagged by a truck'? What did?"

"I did."

"What? Why? Wait, no way, you were kidnapped?! That can't be right. I mean, you're right here, Shin-chan. So it was an attempted kidnapping! Wait, someone tried to *kidnap* you?!"

Takao looked at Midorima, who was sitting right before his eyes, and shook his head, apparently completely baffled.

"Why would someone want to kidnap a giant guy like Shin-chan?"

"Why are you jumping to random conclusions...?!"

Midorima glared at Takao in annoyance. It was such an intense glare that if looks could kill, Takao would likely not have escaped unscathed. Takao relented and raised both of his hands in a gesture of surrender.

"Alright, alright, don't glare at me like that. But that doesn't make any sense, you know? Just telling me 'you got snagged by a truck' doesn't explain anything about what happened."

"..."

Midorima heaved a long sigh for the second time and, with his elbows on the desk, cradled his head in his hands.

Despite having experienced it first-hand, Midorima thought that there was no possible way he would be able to explain what had happened.

That morning, Midorima left his house approximately on time and started to take his usual path to school. He was walking on a narrow residential street. It was a one-way street, one which cars seldom passed through.

But that morning, strangely enough, there was a truck parked in the street.

The truck was parked so that it took up the entire width of the street, such that the only way for him to continue on his way was to squeeze past the side of the vehicle. Since superstition dictated that he must take this path on his way to school, taking a detour was not an option. He could have waited for the truck's driver to return, but he had no idea when that might be. Reluctantly, Midorima turned his body sideways and, walking just like a crab, started to squeeze his way past the truck.

If he walked while pressing his back up against the wall, he would just be able to make it past the side of the vehicle. Midorima worked his way along as quickly and carefully as possible, but all of a sudden, he was jerked backwards.

He turned his head in surprise, only to see that somehow the shoulder strap of his sports bag had gotten caught on one of the metal fittings on the bed of the truck.

Repressing the urge to click his tongue in frustration, he reached out a hand to free the shoulder strap from the metal fitting.

But at that moment—

Vr-vr-vroom.

Telltale, oily fumes spewed out from the rear of the truck.

It can't possibly be... An unsettling suspicion struck Midorima.

In a split-second decision, Midorima yanked the strap of his sports bag off his shoulder, and in the very same instant —

The truck started moving.

“Huh? It started *moving*?! Seriously?!”

Takao, who had been listening to Midorima relate the story, wore an expression that was a mixture of shock and astonishment.

“Why would I lie about something like this?” Midorima said indignantly.

“Well, yeah, but... I mean, would someone really just start driving in that kind of situation? Wouldn't they, I dunno, check behind the truck or something?”

“I don't know. Regardless, the truck started moving.”

“Yeah, okay... So after it started moving, what did you do?”

“I didn't have a choice. I started running.”

“Come again?”

“There's no way I could simply let the truck drive away with my sports bag. So I had to chase after it.”

In the end, until the truck came to a temporary stop before merging onto a main road, Midorima had apparently chased after it as if his life depended on it.

“So before it turned onto the main road, you didn't try yelling ‘Stop—!’ or anything?”

In response to Takao's simple question, Midorima replied, “It would disturb the people in the neighborhood if I were to start yelling like that on a residential street.”

Takao wanted to ask, “Don't you think it's alright to try yelling in a situation like that?”, but previous experience had taught him that it would be pointless to press Midorima any further. So instead, he settled for the “safe” option and, still wearing a stunned expression, said, “What a rough morning.”

However, Midorima's next words were a source of further astonishment.

He said lightly, “Compared to that, falling into a manhole was laughable...”

“Whaaat?! What's that about?”

“It's nothing, really. I just fell into a manhole.”

“Um, there's no such thing as ‘just falling into a manhole’! Why'd you fall in?!”

“Because the cover of the manhole was open, obviously.”

“Yeah, that doesn’t make any sense!”

“An old woman accidentally sprayed me with water while she was watering her garden, so she invited me into her house as an apology. However, when I turned down her invitation and made to leave, there was an open manhole in the way. That’s all.”

“Wait, that doesn’t sound the least bit weird to you?! And don’t give me that ‘that’s all’ crap!”

Takao’s head had started to hurt. The story was so ridiculous that he was tempted to ask, “Is this a joke?”

“Shin-chan, are you cursed or something today? Did you do something bad?”

“...it has nothing to do with you.”

Takao didn’t miss the slight, strange pause that proceeded Midorima’s words.

“No, it has everything to do with me. Umm, let’s see—if something happens to you while we’re together, then I might get mixed up in it, too, you know?”

“What an idiotic...”

Midorima never finished his sentence. A female student shrieked behind him, and then a great deal of water cascaded over his head.

“Whoa—!”

With characteristic reflexes, Takao nimbly hopped backwards in order to avoid the spray.

“I-I’m so sorry, Midorima-kun! Are you alright?!”

Flustered, the female student approached a water-logged Midorima. A flower vase was clutched in her hands.

“I was going to change the water in the flower vase, but I tripped...”

Midorima glumly brushed his dripping hair out of his eyes. A cosmos flower that had evidently tumbled out of the vase with the water fell down from his head. (1)

“...pfft...hehe...ahahahahahaha—!”

Takao could bear it no longer and burst out laughing.

“Whoa! That was straight out of a manga! Shin-chan got...w-with a flower vase...ahahahahaha!!”

Midorima’s expression was murderous, but despite being dead in his sights, Takao could not stop laughing.

The female student was very apologetic and continued to repeat, “I’m sorry! I’m sorry!”

Midorima glanced at her and merely said, “Don’t worry about it,” before he got up and walked out of the classroom. Takao turned to the female student and added, “It’ll be alright. Shin-chan’s got a change of clothes with him.” He then took off after Midorima.

Midorima, who was hurrying on his way to the boys’ locker room, realized that Takao was following him. He didn’t bother to hide his displeasure as he said, “Why are you coming with me?!”

“Well, I was so worried about you, Shin-chan, that...pfft...hehe...!”

"You're enjoying this, aren't you?! Besides, you were just worrying about getting involved! You were trying to figure out a way to save yourself!"

"Man, people sure are scary when they get defensive. Anyway, something must have happened, right? C'mon, tell me!"

Midorima refused to answer and entered the boys' locker room. Takao followed him as if it were the most natural thing in the world for him to do so.

"Takao..."

Midorima glared at Takao in annoyance. Takao gave him a wry smile.

"I told you not to glare at me like that. For starters, get out of that wet uniform. While you dry off, I'll go put it in the clubhouse laundry."

"..."

With nothing but a small sigh, Midorima turned away and started to undress.

- - - - -

After he had changed into his spare uniform and started to return to the classroom, Midorima reluctantly told Takao his suspicions about what had happened. Takao's eyes went wide.

"So basically, all that stuff happened to you because you don't have the item for your horoscope?!"

"Most likely, yes... I brought all of the red items I could find around my house, but they haven't had any effect."

As he spoke, Midorima opened the fastener of his sports bag. Inside, there was a red ballpoint pen, a cup, a chili pepper, a plate, a one-eyed *daruma*, and a pair of high heels, among other items. His bag was overflowing with the color red.

"Whoa...what a collection..." Takao said. He picked up the pair of high heels.

"Are these your mother's?"

"Yes. It seems she used to wear them when she was younger."

"Yeah...? I bet your mother never thought her sentimental belongings would come in handy at a time like this, huh?"

Takao's amazed expression gradually shifted as he tried to suppress another bout of laughter.

"I mean, you have all this bad luck just because you don't have the right item...? 'Oha Asa' is really something else...pfft!"

Takao was on the verge of bursting into laughter, but he somehow fought back the urge when he felt Midorima's eyes on him.

Instead, he schooled his features into a neutral expression and asked, "You must have missed a day before now, right? What'd you do then?"

"I have never missed a day."

"Huh?"

“Ever since I started watching ‘Oha Asa’, I have never missed a day.”

“Seriously?!”

“Yes. There have been times when I was unable to acquire the lucky item, but I have never missed a day.”

“Whoa, that’s hardcore.”

Takao raised both hands toward the ceiling as if to say all hope was lost. From there, he clasped his hands behind his head and looked directly at Midorima.

“I don’t really understand the reason why this is happening, but wouldn’t it be best to try and find your lucky item? At this rate, you might die of back luck, you know?”

“What an idiotic…”

Before he said anything further, Midorima cast a glance over his shoulder to make sure that no one was approaching him with a flower vase this time.

Upon seeing this, Takao pointed out, “See, you’re obviously worried about it.”

“Between the flower vase just now and the truck this morning, don’t you think that’s a little bit too unlucky? I’m just sayin’, I guess it really *is* dangerous for you not to have your lucky item.”

“But these are the only red items I have.”

“Well, then we’ll just have to find some other ones, right?”

Takao rifled through his school bag for a moment. When he found what he was looking for, he said, “Here ya go,” and held it out to Midorima.

“As far as red items go, this is all I’ve got.”

“...what is *that* supposed to be?”

In response to Midorima, who was suspiciously eyeing the item being offered to him, Takao replied, “Can’t you tell? It’s a headband,” as if there were nothing unusual about it.

Takao twirled the thin, red headband around with his left hand.

“It’s red, ain’t it?”

“I can see that. But you can’t possibly intend to give it to me…?”

“Yep. Wanna put it on?”

“Why would I do that?!”

“What d’ya mean? It might be your lucky item.”

“There’s no way I could wear something so girly!”

“Hey, I use it sometimes! It’s really handy, so just try it on!”

“I refuse! Besides, why on earth do you have a red headband in the first place?!”

“My little sister gave it to me! It’s pretty cute, huh?!”

“How should I know?!”

“Come on, just put it on already! It’s better than dying, right?!”

“—!!”

Midorima immediately fell silent. Takao saw his chance and pressed his advantage.

“If a headband really *were* the lucky item from ‘Oha Asa’, you’d wear one, wouldn’t you?”

Midorima was absolutely silent. Takao quickly set the headband in place on Midorima’s head.

Takao grinned...or rather, he smiled in satisfaction.

That moment marked the first time since they had started attending Shuutoku High School that Takao had successfully managed to persuade Midorima.

- - - - -

Immediately after second period ended, Takao said to Midorima, “Shin-chan, I don’t think that’s your lucky item.”

“...I figured that out a while ago,” Midorima replied while he massaged his temples. Even though it was still only mid-morning, he was already exhausted.

First and second period were combined into a double period for art class.

After they had relocated to the art room, they were tasked with making a sketch of a sculpture...or at least, that had been the plan.

That plan never became reality—the reason being that Midorima had destroyed the sculptures.

At the beginning of first period, the art teacher had directed Midorima and several other male students to place the sculptures around the classroom. The teacher planned to have the students divide into groups and make sketches of the sculptures.

However, the sculptures turned out to be considerably heavy. Midorima stumbled while carrying one of them and fell down, and in the process, he managed to trip up another one of the students carrying a sculpture. Then, just like a line of dominoes, that student knocked over another student, who in turn knocked over *another* student... As a result of this chain reaction, all of the sculptures lay in pieces.

As a matter of course, Midorima had to suffer a scolding from the art teacher.

Back in the classroom, Takao returned the headband to his bag. He said, “Hey, cheer up, okay?” and patted Midorima on the shoulder.

“You can’t give up hope yet!”

“I can’t believe you can say things like that without any intention of taking responsibility for them...”

“It’ll be fine; it’ll be fine! I’ve already taken care of it. Just leave it to me!”

Takao flashed Midorima a thumbs up.

“How so?”

Takao's words, which were brimming with confidence, conversely heightened Midorima's feeling of uneasiness. One of their classmates called to them, "Takao, there's a senpai here to see you!"

Together, Midorima and Takao turned their attention to the doorway, where Ootsubo Taisuke, a third year, was standing. Ootsubo waved and said, "Yo," while he waited for them to come closer.

"Why are you here, Captain...?"

Midorima cocked his head to one side in confusion, and Takao cheerfully replied, "I asked him to come."

"You got here fast, Captain."

Ootsubo replied, exasperated, "You're one who sent me a text asking me to hurry over. Anyway, Midorima."

Ootsubo turned to Midorima with a serious expression. "I hear you're in the middle of a crisis. I don't know whether this is your lucky item or not, but I thought I'd give it a shot."

He offered the paper bag he was carrying to Midorima.

"Don't die, got it?"

"Why is everyone making such a big deal out of this...?"

Midorima accepted the paper bag and cast a sidelong glance at Takao. Takao nonchalantly averted his eyes.

"...is it alright if I look at what's inside?" Midorima inquired of Ootsubo, who answered, "Sure, go ahead," with a kind smile.

"Oh, I wanna see! I wanna see! What kind of stuff does the captain carry around with him...huh?"

Upon seeing the item that had been withdrawn from the bag, Takao's eyes narrowed.

"W-what *is* that...?"

Standing beside a dumbstruck Takao, Midorima mutely withdrew a long scarf from the bag.

"...this is...hand-knitted, isn't it?"

Midorima focused his gaze on the scarf. Ootsubo smiled happily and said, "Oh, you can tell?"

Ootsubo's reaction elicited an immediate response from Takao.

"Oh, was it a present from one of your fans, Captain?! Like, 'This is a handmade scarf! I hope it keeps you nice and warm! Even though I wish I could be the one to keep you warm!', or something like that?!"

Midorima and Ootsubo started coolly at Takao, who had spoken in a cute, perky falsetto and even raised his pinky finger for the full effect. (2)

"Takao, that's weird."

"Yeah, it's pretty weird."

"*Et tu*, Captain?! But isn't that what happened?!" Takao protested with a pout.

"Sorry to disappoint, but that's not it," Ootsubo answered. "I'm the one who made it."

"Whaaaaaat?!"

Midorima and Takao looked back and forth between the scarf and Ootsubo, then stared at the scarf once more.

It was quite well made.

“Captain, I didn’t know knitting was one of your hobbies...”

“Of course it’s not. I made it in home economics class.”

“Oh, I see...”

“But I started enjoying myself while I was knitting. So it got a little long.”

Ootsubo laughed as if he were slightly embarrassed. “I tend to go a little overboard with things like that.”

“A little long’, you say...,” Midorima said as he held up the scarf. It was as long as Midorima was tall. (3)

“It’s so *long*...,” Takao murmured. It was a thought that was better left unsaid, but the length of the scarf was such that it was practically begging to be verbalized.

“I’ve got some other stuff, too. Have a look.”

With a smile, Ootsubo pointed to the paper bag. His smile was overflowing with joy at having an opportunity to show off his handiwork.

Midorima did as he was told and rummaged through the bag. One after another, he pulled out a red wool sweater, a handbag, a hat, *aharamaki*, a lap blanket, a coaster, a stuffed animal, mittens, and finally something that looked like a scrub brush. To top it off, all of them had been knitted with red wool.

"Just how much do you like the color red?! And just how much stuff is in there, anyway?!"

Takao was astounded. Beside him, Midorima was quiet, his expression drawn. He had been rendered speechless.

Ootsubo appeared to pay no mind to their reactions as he confidently replied, "It was like a chain reaction. I started making knickknacks in order to use up the rest of the knitting wool. But I ran out of wool before I finished making them, so I bought more wool, but then I had extra again. In the meantime, they just kind of multiplied."

"Oh, is that so..."

Takao calmly crossed his arms and stared at Ootsubo's hands.

The entire team depended on those hands to defend the goal during games—but to think that those hands could *knit*, as well...

"Pfft!"

Takao hurriedly ducked his head and clamped both hands over his mouth, desperately trying to suppress the laughter welling up inside him.

"What's wrong, Takao?"

"It's n-n-n-n-nothing...!"

Ootsubo raised one eyebrow at Takao, whose shoulders were shaking slightly, but he didn't press the issue.

"Midorima, I don't know if one of these is your lucky item or not, but you can go ahead and use them."

Then he left to return to his own classroom.

After seeing Ootsubo on his way, Midorima silently wrapped the scarf around his neck.

"...it's hot."

Even at the beginning of autumn, the summer heat still lingered.

The scarf was long enough to loop three times around Midorima's neck with plenty to spare, by which point the insulating power of the scarf was absolutely stifling him. The sight was enough to make Takao laugh uncontrollably until he was on the verge of hyperventilating.

At lunchtime, Miyaji Kiyoshi and Kimura Shinsuke dropped by Midorima and Takao's classroom.

"Hey, Midorima. We heard you almost died," Miyaji said, sounding delighted.

Midorima coolly replied, "I'm alive, as you can see."

"It was a pretty close call, though," Takao corrected with a smirk as he stood leaning against the doorframe.



Midorima glared sidelong at him. It was a look that clearly said, “You should have kept your mouth shut.”

However, Takao wasn’t one to be intimidated by such things. When the shaven-headed Kimura asked, “So, what happened?”, Takao spilled all the details.

“He borrowed a red scarf from the captain. And Shin-chan being Shin-chan, he wore it even during our third-period gym class.”

They played soccer in gym class. The sport might be different, but it was an easy class for Midorima and Takao, whose motor skills had been honed playing basketball. With the red scarf trailing behind him, Midorima dribbled the ball down the field, dodged the players of the opposing team, and went to score a goal. However—

“One of the guys on the other team stepped on the scarf, and Shin-chan went crashing to the ground. What’s more, since the scarf was wrapped really tightly around his neck, he started choking to death...”

“Serves you right! I mean, that must have been awful, Midorima!”

In response to Miyaji’s wholly insincere sentiment, Midorima’s features twisted into a sour expression.

“Hey, now, don’t make that face. We brought some red items with us, too.”

Kimura presented the paper bag he held in his hand.

“What is it?”

Midorima scrutinized the paper bag with the look of a king examining tribute offered up to him by one of his retainers.

“They’re goods from my family’s store! Red paprika, a red tomato, a red apple, and a red strawberry! They look delicious, am I right?!” Kimura answered proudly.

Takao asked, “What do you mean, a ‘red strawberry’? They’re always red.” However, as was to be expected of a greengrocer’s son, Kimura announced the following piece of trivia: “They’ve got white strawberries now, too, mind you.”

“My old man was in the neighborhood making deliveries, so I had him drop off some stuff. You’d better be grateful!”

Midorima silently accepted the paper bag before turning to Miyaji.

He wore a look that said, “So? What have *you* brought for me?”

Miyaji found that haughty attitude somewhat irksome, but he said, “I brought this,” and held out a red t-shirt. It was the one he often wore during practice.

“You’d better appreciate this,” Miyaji said arrogantly, as if to emphasize that he was doing Midorima a favor.

“No, you can keep it,” came Midorima’s immediate reply.

“Whaaat?!”

“No matter how badly I might need a lucky item, I don’t need a sweaty thing like that.”

“I washed it, damn it! That should be obvious!”

“Do you use fabric softener when you do your laundry?”

“Huh?”

“I don’t accept clothes that haven’t been washed with fabric softener.”

“What a pain!! Argh!! Ugh, Kimura, lend me your truck! I’m gonna run him over! I’m gonna do it, I swear!”

Despite the racket Miyaji was making, there was no one around to back him up. Kimura said, “Just take it for now,” and forced Midorima to accept the t-shirt. By the time the two senpai had gone on their way, lunchtime was drawing to an end.

After returning to his seat, Takao wiped away tears from the corners of his eyes.

“Man, that was hilarious. Shin-chan, I think I’m going to die laughing before you get a chance to kick the bucket.”

“Hnn. The sooner you die, the sooner I get some peace and quiet.”

“Shin-chan, that’s harsh!”

Midorima countered Takao’s sullen pout by saying, “I’m just being honest,” before withdrawing his *bentou* box from his school bag. Unless he ate quickly, afternoon classes would start before he could finish his meal. Asking a growing high school boy to miss lunch was the same as sending a traveler into the desert without any water.

“...hm?”

“What’s the matter, Shin-chan?”

Takao, who had taken out his own *bentou* and picked up his chopsticks, looked at Midorima. Since Takao had eaten an early lunch mid-morning, only about half of his lunch remained. Even if he ate at a normal pace, he would easily be able to finish before the end of their break.

On the other hand, since Midorima made a rule of never eating early, he would need to eat his lunch with considerable speed.

Nevertheless, Midorima had only gotten as far as untying the handkerchief wrapped around his *bentou* box.

“Aren’t you gonna eat?” Takao inquired curiously. Midorima was staring fixedly at his *bentou*.

“Something seems...*different* about it...”

There was an uncharacteristic hesitancy to his manner of speaking that made Takao stop and look at Midorima’s *bentou*.

It was Midorima’s usual rectangular *bentou* box, wrapped in the same handkerchief it was every day.

“Is it just my imagination...?”

Midorima still seemed unsatisfied with this explanation, but his appetite apparently won out, as he quickly untied the handkerchief.

And at that moment, Midorima discovered the source of his uneasiness.

“Bwahahahahaha!!”

Takao burst into laughter. Midorima fought back a headache.

“So that’s why it felt different...”

Midorima stared reproachfully at the item that was settled on the handkerchief.

A Japanese dictionary, still in its case, was enshrined atop the handkerchief.

No matter how many times he blinked, the dictionary wasn't going to suddenly change into a *bentou* box.

Apparently, amid the commotion caused by the thieving cat that morning, Midorima's mother had packed the dictionary by mistake.

As if to rouse Midorima from where he sat, hanging his head, the chime that signaled the end of the break echoed through the halls.

- - - - -

After that, other members of the basketball club dropped by one after another to deliver red items to Midorima.

Originally, Takao had only sent a text to Ootsubo, Miyaji, and Kimura, but it seemed that the three of them had then taken the initiative and forwarded that text to the rest of the club members.

The items they brought were incredibly varied.

In addition to stationery such as a compass, a ruler, and an eraser, they also received items that made them wonder why someone would bring those items to school, including a water gun, a red rose, a *tengumask*, and a string of prayer beads. Among the people who delivered items, there was even someone who had misunderstood the situation and brought baby diapers with him. (4) Midorima's bad mood worsened by leaps and bounds, while Takao laughed so hard that he got a stomachache.

However, no matter what items people brought, Midorima's unluckiness did not abate. Naturally, he had already received a scolding from the teacher. Rather, by that point, the teacher was essentially scolding the heap of red items overflowing from Midorima's school bag and surrounding him while he sat through the lecture.

"Shin-chan, you made it!"

After school, Takao patted Midorima on the shoulder as the latter sat slumped over his desk, exhausted.

"When you say it with a grin like that, it just makes me angry..."

Midorima glared at him from behind his glasses. Takao smiled and said, "I mean, rather than fretting about it, it's better to laugh it off, yeah?"

"Hmph..." Midorima grunted and stood up.

"I'm going home."

As Midorima started to pack up to head home, Takao asked, "What about practice?"

"I'm not going. Nothing good is going to happen on a day like today. It would be problematic if I were to practice and develop some kind of bad habit that affects my form."

"Good point. Okay, I'll head home with you."

"What did you say?"

Midorima stopped packing up and stared at Takao.

"There's no reason for you to be absent from practice, too."

“Yeah, that’s true, I guess. But, Shin-chan, it seems like it’d be kinda dangerous to leave you alone today.”

While he spoke, Takao started packing up his things, as well, but he stopped when he realized that Midorima had frozen in place, silent.

“What is it? What’s wrong?”

“...it feels strange to have you worrying about me.”

Midorima’s expression was both angry and sulky. Takao looked at him in astonishment.

“Of course I’m worried. What am I supposed to do if you just up and die before the Winter Cup?”

“...”

Midorima fell silent once more, and he fiddled with his glasses as if he were trying to hide something.

Upon seeing this, a light bulb went off in Takao’s head as he was struck by a sudden realization.

So it was on purpose that he smiled a broad, evil grin and said, “Well, that’s my excuse. I might actually just want to see a few more of Shin-chan’s amusing episodes, though.”

“...hmp, I figured as much.”

With that, Midorima finally resumed packing up to go home.

Good grief, Takao thought to himself. *What, your brain short circuits when you get embarrassed? When are you gonna learn to be honest with yourself?*

It seemed that being worried about by his teammates made Midorima feel a bit uncomfortable.

After collecting red items from his teammates throughout the day, he had finally realized that they had gone to such lengths because they were “worried about him”—but now he was perplexed and unsure how to respond.

Geez, our ace is such a handful.

A smile quirked at the corners of Takao’s mouth, but he was careful to keep this expression hidden from Midorima while he sent a text to Ootsubo to let him know they would be absent from club activities.

Even after they left school, bad luck continued to target Midorima.

He fell down in the street five times. He collided with another person four times (one of those times, he bumped into someone making deliveries for a soba shop, and—sure enough—he ended up wearing a bowl of soba on his head). He was barked at by a dog four times. He was almost run over by a car twice. He was splashed by someone watering a garden. He brushed his hand against a freshly painted wall. At a vending machine, he pressed the button for “Oshiruko”, but the machine dispensed a can of hot tomato juice instead.

“It’s actually kind of clever the way the bad luck’s finding ways to keep coming, don’t ya think?” Takao said thoughtfully as he walked beside Midorima down the sidewalk in the shopping district.

“...as a matter of fact, I don’t think so at all.”

Midorima’s expression was gloomy as he shifted his grip on the shoulder strap of his sports bag.

There were no longer any red items inside the bag.

For the time being, they had left all of the items at school, since it was clear that today's lucky item was not among the various items they had gathered throughout the day.

"We managed to collect quite a few red items, didn't we? I wonder how many there were," Takao muttered.

In response, Midorima pushed his glasses up the bridge of his nose. "Ten pieces of stationery, nine handmade objects, three articles of clothing, five foodstuffs, twelve everyday items, two ornaments, six toys, and three plants. That's fifty in all."

"...whoa, when did you categorize all that?"

"Precision is required in order to accurately comprehend one's situation."

"Oh, yeah? But, you know, we didn't manage to find the right item, even with all that stuff. I wonder what it could be."

"Hnn. We'll just have to keep looking until we find it."

"Are we actually gonna be able to find it...?"

Takao breathed a sigh.

At that moment, he heard a faint shriek from somewhere nearby. It was the voice of a young girl—one who sounded incredibly distraught.

Takao spun around, searching the vicinity for the source of the voice.

"What's wrong?" Midorima inquired warily.

"Did you hear something just now? It sounded like somebody shouting."

"Shouting? No, I didn't. I can hardly hear anything except the racket from the construction going on over there."

Midorima pointed to the neighboring construction site.

It appeared that a new building was being constructed. The site was surrounded by a guard wall and sheeting, and the sounds of rebar being welded and material being hammered continued without interruption.

"No, it was a different kind of sound. It was kinda, you know...ah."

Takao turned around and saw what he had been looking for.

Next to one of the trees planted along the sidewalk stood a young girl who looked to be about five years old. She seemed upset.

She had tears in her eyes, and she was staring motionlessly toward the top of the tree.

When Takao lifted his gaze, he saw that a pair of balloons was caught in the tree.

Perhaps because the strings tied to the balloons had become entangled, the balloons were next to each other, bumping against the tree branches.

"Aah, I guess the balloons got away from her..."

"Balloons?"

Midorima tilted his head to one side in confusion at Takao's muttered statement. He followed Takao's gaze and finally understood the situation.

"Children lose things all the time," Midorima said brusquely. He started walking, but Takao laid a hand on his shoulder and forced him to stop.

"What is it?"

"Shin-chan, go get them for her."

"...why do I have to?"

"What's wrong with doing a good deed?"

"I refuse. I don't like children. Besides, why don't *you* do it?"

"Me, I can't get serious with anybody under the age of fifteen."

"You're talking about a completely different kind of 'serious'!"

"So, Shin-chan, you have no problem just ignoring a crying girl?"

In response to Takao's question, Midorima huffed and answered with silence. Then Takao dealt the finishing blow.

"Besides, those balloons are red."

"What?"

When Midorima looked up once more, he saw that both of the balloons caught in the tree were indeed red.

"If you're gonna look for every red item under the sun, then why not a balloon?" Takao said with a grin.

Midorima glared at Takao in annoyance, but he yanked his sports bag off his shoulder and shoved it at him.

Takao gleefully accepted the bag and rushed over to the girl. He crouched down to her eye level and started talking to her about something. As she listened to Takao speak, little by little, the girl's expression became colored with surprise.

When Takao pointed to Midorima, the little girl looked at him with eyes brimming with astonishment and hope.

Midorima turned away, feeling uncomfortable, and readjusted his glasses.

Not a single thing has gone right today, Midorima thought with a scowl.

Takao stood up and moved off to one side with the girl, so as not to obstruct Midorima's jump. With that, all the preparations were in order. There was no reason to wait any longer.

"Honestly..."

Midorima exhaled softly and flexed his ankles. He was wearing the everyday shoes he wore to commute to and from school, but he thought he would be able to jump high enough to retrieve the balloons. The bigger problem was finding the will to do it.

"Nothing has gone right today...", Midorima muttered, his voice tinged with resignation. He started running.

Just as if he were doing a layup, he jumped two steps before reaching the tree. He kicked off the ground with his

dominant foot and jumped as high as he could. With his outstretched hand, he seized the strings tied to the balloons. And then, just at that moment—

Kaboom!!

A deafening crash resounded behind him. A scream immediately followed.

“?!”

After landing back on the ground, Midorima frantically spun around—and could not believe his eyes.

The strip of sidewalk from which Midorima had jumped had now vanished. Well, that wasn't entirely accurate.

Some of the materials from the construction site had collided with the guard wall and caused it to collapse. The sidewalk was completely hidden from view.

“Wha...”

Midorima felt his throat go dry.

Just a few seconds ago, he had been standing in that exact spot. If he had not started running when he did, he would have been crushed beneath the wall as it fell.

Midorima stared unblinkingly at that spot.

Takao was also staring at the site of the accident, his eyes wide as saucers.

“Onii-chan?”

Something warm touched Midorima's hand. As a result, he snapped out of his reverie. The little girl's hand was on his. Against the warmth of her hand, Midorima's hand felt chilled to the bone.

“Um, the balloons...”

She was staring eagerly at the balloons. It seemed that she considered them to be a more pressing issue than the accident.

“Oh, yeah...”

Midorima held out the balloons to her. “Don't let go this time.”

“I won't! Thank you!!”

Her face lit up with a smile, and she accepted the balloons.

“Thank goodness! See, these balloons are my lucky item today, so I have to have them no matter what.”

“I see.‘lucky item’?”

Midorima did a double take. With those words, Takao saw all the pieces fall into place.

Takao crouched down to the girl's eye level. “Hey, listen... By ‘lucky item’, do you mean the one from the ‘Oha Asa’ horoscopes?” he asked tentatively.

“That's right! Onii-chan, you sure know your stuff!”

“...and is your zodiac sign...Cancer?”

“Yep!! Thanks so much, onii-chan! I’ll give you this as a present!”

The girl offered one of her two balloons to Midorima, who accepted it without complaint. The girl smiled sweetly in satisfaction and hurried on her way. As she ran, the red balloon bobbed along behind her.

Together, Midorima and Takao turned to face the site of the accident.

Fortunately, it seemed no one had been injured, but the area was still in a state of chaos.

They could hear patrol car sirens in the distance.

“Hey, Shin-chan...”

With an unsettled, weary expression, Takao rose to his feet and stood beside Midorima.

“Good thing you didn’t die, huh? ...and ‘Oha Asa’... I mean, that’s no joke...”

Midorima nodded. As if to admonish himself, he murmured, “This is why I can never afford to miss ‘Oha Asa’.”

- - - - -

Translation Notes:

(1) As a side note: Ironically, cosmos flowers represent peace, order, tranquility, and harmony.

(2) In Japan, making a fist and holding up your pinky finger is a gesture that indicates a “girlfriend” or “female love interest”. (In contrast, making a “thumbs-up” gesture can be used to indicate a “boyfriend” or “male love interest”).

(3) That’s 6’3” (195 cm) of scarf. I have newfound respect for Ootsubo.

(4) The Japanese word for “red” is “aka” (「赤」), while the word for “baby” or “infant” is “akachan” (「赤ちゃん」), which uses the same kanji and reading as the former. Someone apparently misunderstood the text message, although why a high school boy would bring diapers to school is beyond me.

So, canon: Takao has a little sister. Being an older sibling myself, I somehow expected that. XD No wonder he’s so good at dealing with children and Midorima.

[SOURCE](#)